NAPOLEON THE GAOLER

EDWARD FRASER

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NAPOLEON IN HADES

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NAPOLEON THE GAOLER

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND ADVENTURES OF BRITISH SAILORS AND SOLDIERS DURING THE GREAT CAPTIVITY

BY

EDWARD FRASER

AUTHOR OF
"THE SAILORS WHOM NELSON LED," ETC.

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THIS year has seen the Centenary of the release of Napoleon's British Prisoners of War. In that connection these narratives of the exceptional experiences and adventures that some of them went through should be timely in their interest, and also prove useful as a general historical record. The book offers also, I venture to think, a new picture to the great gallery of Napoleonic portraits, and one that, it may be, is less familiar than some others—a portrait of Napoleon as the Gaoler of Europe.

E. F.

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NAPOLEON'S METHODS WITH HIS CONTINENTAL CAPTIVES

HALF a million of men, in round numbers, passed the frontiers of France between 1803 and 1814 as prisoners of war.

Of the total, the British prisoners numbered fewer than 12,000,* and of these, speaking generally, more than a third were merchantman officers and sailors captured at sea by French frigates and privateers. Of the naval officers and men who fell into Napoleon's hands during the Great War nine out of ten were the victims of shipwreck in home waters, off the coasts of France and Holland, or of strandings under fire while on blockade duty, or when chasing French vessels inshore. Stragglers taken during Sir John Moore's disastrous Corunna campaign, or at the time of the ill-fated Walcheren expedition, formed the bulk of the British soldiers interned as prisoners of war in France. What prisoners the French made from Wellington's army during the five years of the Peninsular War mostly trickled into the depôts in France by driblets, so to speak, as they were taken here and there at the front, either cut off singly or in small numbers, or captured in isolated detachments.

Napoleon's British prisoners of war also, in regard to

* The numbers are variously stated: it is impossible to get at the exact figures even from records at the Ministry of War in Paris. They are sometimes put as high as from 15,000 to 16,000, but about 12,000 seems as near the mark as it is safe to go.

the way in which Napoleon dealt with them, went through hardships and ill-treatment bad enough, but, except in certain isolated cases in which a reason could be assigned, entirely different from the atrocious and inhuman maltreatment undergone by the captives of the Grand Army from the Continental battlefields. That was so, undoubtedly, for one sufficiently cogent reason: as a matter of prudence on Napoleon's part, in view of ever possible British reprisals. Between 1803 and 1814 no fewer than 122,400 French prisoners, practically all soldiers and sailors, were landed in England as prisoners of war. Napoleon, in such circumstances, could not venture to treat his British prisoners as he treated the captured soldiers of his beaten European enemies, the prisoners taken at Ulm and Austerlitz and Wagram, the wretched Prussians swept up after the Jena campaign, or his yet more cruelly ill-used Spanish captives.

Of that harsh and brutal feature of the warfare of the Napoleonic period hardly anything has ever been told on this side of the Channel. An outline of the story at the outset here will serve to show to what lengths Napoleon was prepared to go where there was no deterring influence to induce him to stay his hand; to set forth what the fortune of war saved our soldiers and sailors who fell into Napoleon's power from having to suffer.

To begin with the fate of the 90,000 or 100,000 victims of the first campaigns of the Grand Army, the unfortunate Austrian prisoners from Ulm and Austerlitz. Napoleon practically made slaves of them during the months that they remained in France; condemning them to servitude as hewers of wood and drawers of water for their captors. He directed that they should be made to toil as field labourers, or in the employ of the municipal authorities in return for their keep, certain of them being given the alternative of forswearing their nationality and taking service in the French foreign legions.

"They will take the place of our conscripts in field

labour," announced Napoleon in his proclamation to his victorious army on the day after the capitulation of Ulm, when speaking of the Austrian prisoners. At the same time he wrote this to Champagny, his Minister of the Interior at that time: "Upwards of 70,000 prisoners will arrive in France. Send information to the prefects desiring them to notify their coming to landowners and farmers who may wish to employ them, so that they may state their requirements. Have the prisoners distributed among the Departments, taking care not to place them too near the frontiers of Germany. M. Cretet, Director of Public Works, can also utilize them in gangs as battalions of pioneers. The prisoners have cost me dearly: see that you make use of them." These were Napoleon's actual words: "Près de 70,000 prisonniers se rendent en France. Il faut que vous écriviez aux préfets pour que les propriétaires qui voulent en employer dans leur terres fassent leur demande et qu'on disperse ces prisonniers dans différents départements, en évitant d'en mettre dans ceux frontières d'Allemagne. M. Cretet (directeur des ponts et chaussées) pourrait en former des bataillons de pionniers. Ces prisonniers me coutent fort cher. Voyez à les utiliser."

The hapless Austrians, though, had had, before they reached France, to experience cruel humiliations and ill-treatment—indeed, even before they left the field of battle.

The Ulm prisoners, immediately after the surrender, were stripped of their cloaks and boots, many of them also of their uniform coats. They were started off on their long tramp to France regardless of what they might suffer from the inclemency of the terrible weather that prevailed. Their clothing and foot-gear were wanted to supply the French soldiers. Many of the French regiments were almost in rags we are told, owing to the poor quality of the clothing supplied by the army contractors, and also practically shoeless ("presque nu-pieds," says a Staff

officer), their boots having been worn out in the long forced marches from the camp of Boulogne over the rough roads of the Vosges and the Black Forest in the wet and stormy weather of that autumn. The old coats and worn-out shoes of the French were given in exchange to the prisoners, to make shift with as best they might. Several of the French regiments at Austerlitz in the following December, as a fact, particularly those in Marshal Soult's Army Corps, took part in the battle dressed in white uniform coats stripped off the Austrian prisoners at Ulm in the previous October.

Peace was signed at Pressburg on December 29, 1805, but the unfortunate prisoners of Ulm, to whom had been added the Austerlitz prisoners and others from elsewhere, were not released. The Austrian Government loyally sent back the French prisoners in their hands in accordance with the terms of the treaty, but no Austrian prisoners were forthcoming from France. Napoleon retained all his prisoners, and then, in reply to a demand from Vienna for their return, refused to give them up. The Austrians, he asserted, had not accounted for all the 1,500 prisoners who had fallen into their hands in the war. They were keeping many of them back, he declared, in duress, undergoing "un régime sévère" in Carniola and Hungary. In March, 1806, tiring apparently of the correspondence on the subject, he made a show of intending to release his prisoners at an early date, but it was not until the following August that the Austrian prisoners were finally handed their *feuilles de route* to leave France; and even then numbers of them never arrived in their own country at all. Every kind of underhand artifice was resorted to, with the idea of inducing as many as possible of the Austrians, while on the march through France to the Rhine, to desert and enrol themselves in the foreign legions of German subjects which Napoleon was at that time forming as auxiliary corps to the Grand Army. Recruiting officers of German extraction hung round the

columns of departing prisoners, like wasps buzzing round a jam-pot, to cajole or bribe the Austrians to take service under Napoleon. "Mon intention est," wrote Napoleon to Berthier on May 11, 1806, "qu'il déserte le plus d'Autrichiens possible."

His purpose was to cripple the army of Austria by that means: by depriving her regiments of all the trained men that he could. To that end also Napoleon secretly incited the authorities of Baden, Würtemberg, and Bavaria, which States were at that time under French domination, and through whose territories the returning prisoners had to pass to do their part in inducing the Austrian soldiers to desert, giving them leave to draft as many of the Austrians as they could get hold of into their own armies. "Mon intention est que les Bavarois, les Würtembergeois, les Badois en prennent autant qu'ils pourront. . . . Les prisonniers seront escortés par les troupes de Bavière, de Würtemberg et de Bade, et, comme de raison elles en prendront le plus qu'elles pourront en route et laisseront déserter tous ceux qui les voudront."

The 140,000 Prussian prisoners sent to France after the Jena campaign were dealt with in much the same way that the captive Austrians from Ulm and Austerlitz had been ordered to be disposed of. They were indeed, in addition, treated more shamefully still. After being collected in great camps near Dijon and Troyes, most of the Prussians were tramped round the country and farmed out to the municipal and communal authorities broadcast over France, "offering the use of their disarmed services, for which moderate pay would suffice, to our manufacturers and cultivators to replace our conscripts in the fields." That was what was done at first. But Napoleon went further still. There were more than enough prisoners to go round. With so great a number on his hands, Napoleon, to save their keep, offered to hire out several thousand of the Prussians to Holland and Spain, to be turned to account in those countries. Those

sent to Holland might be employed, he suggested, as in France, to replace in agricultural work the Dutch conscripts which Napoleon required Holland to supply. Those sent to Spain were offered specially for enrolment in the foreign regiments of the Spanish army, Spain being at that time still in nominal alliance with France. "Si l'Espagne et la Hollande," wrote Napoleon from Berlin, "veulent avoir de ces prisonniers, on peut leur en donner. Si le Prince de Paix en veut 10,000 je les lui enverrai." Black, however, as Napoleon has to be painted in regard to this matter, he must at least be given his due. One stipulation he did make. The Prussians were not to be shipped across the Atlantic to work in the Spanish mines: they were to be used as soldiers only. "J'y attacherai la condition," said Napoleon when instructing Talleyrand to make the offer to Spain, "qu'on ne les envoie pas en Amérique travailler aux mines, mais qu'on en fasse des soldats en Espagne." Napoleon, in addition, sent a considerable number of the Prussians to Naples to his brother Joseph, to be enrolled in the ranks of the Neapolitan army.

Years of cruel servitude were in store for the ill-fated Prussian captives, until after the fall of Paris in 1814. As one minor incident of their humiliation, it fell to them in several places, we are told, to have to decorate the triumphal arches "erected in honour of the victors of Jena and Friedland" during the fêtes of 1808, when the Grand Army, on its way from Germany to Spain, marched across France amid scenes of jubilant excitement and exultation. Remarks a French officer, whose regiment was among those fêted by the authorities of Nancy: "We found several thousand Prussian prisoners at Nancy, and the poor wretches had to erect the decorated arches and to witness the feasting of their conquerors and the public crowning with wreaths of laurel of the victorious standards of Jena."

During the Jena campaign, at the time of their capture

in the field, the Prussian prisoners had had to undergo the same brigand treatment that had previously been the harsh fate of the Austrian prisoners of Ulm and Austerlitz. As before, the French army was desperately in need of boots and clothing to replace that worn out on campaign. By Napoleon's orders the Prussian soldiers, we are told, "on being taken were marched off to the nearest bivouacs of the French, where they were stripped of their coats and cloaks, many of them even of their underclothing, their shirts; and had their boots pulled off for distribution on the spot among their captors, receiving in exchange the worn-out and tattered garments and broken shoes of our soldiers."

The Prussian prisoners in France had to drain the cup of their bitter humiliation to the very dregs. More degrading than even municipal drudgery, or digging and ploughing in the fields for their captors, was the fate that befel not a few of the hapless Prussians, and from almost the outset of their captivity.

Reluctance to obey orders, or the raising of objection to work set them, was for the prisoners constituted a penal offence. At several places in France, not long after their arrival on distribution, the Prussian prisoners, it is stated, "proved troublesome" on being told off to their tasks. They were not to be made slaves of, protested the poor fellows. Their refusal to do field labour, on being brought in due course to Napoleon's notice, received short shrift. "C'est une mauvaise plaisanterie de dire que les prisonniers ne veulent pas travailler" was his cynical comment on hearing the news. Napoleon thereupon issued an order atrocious in its deliberate inhumanity. The recalcitrant Prussians, he laid down, were to be treated as convicts sentenced to penal servitude. The "strikers," with other Prussians who for their part had objected to be forced into the Spanish service, were at once drafted off in gangs and marched to out-of-the-way districts on the coast of France, escorted by armed guards instructed to shoot

down any who "proved rebellious" *en route*, or tried to escape. They were forcibly compelled now to labour at digging canals, making military roads, building embankments, and reclaiming and draining marsh-lands. Some were drafted off to the South of France to toil there among the swamps of the estuary of the Rhone. Others were similarly set to work in the marshes of Gascony and the desolate wastes at the mouth of the Charente and the Garonne, and in the neighbourhood of Rochefort. That was the punishment dealt out to the Prussians who objected to go to Spain. Wrote Napoleon in March, 1807, on hearing that there had been difficulties with some of these prisoners: "Puisque les Prussians ne veulent pas aller en Espagne, prenez ce pretexte pour les dissoudre dans le Languedoc et les faire employer au canal d'Arles et aux marais de Rochefort." Others, again, were packed off to the north and planted down in penal colonies among the dreary fever-stricken mud-flats of Walcheren. "Rien peu" of these unfortunates, it is stated, survived to return to their native land in 1814. A number of the Prussian prisoners, furthermore, were even compulsorily enrolled to serve on fatigue duty in the transport and artillery train of the French army corps stationed along the coast in the west of France and Brittany.

Not a few, indeed, of the Prussian prisoners, besides these, Napoleon's recruiting agents, busy among them as elsewhere, enlisted—as the alternative to their daily drudgery—into the ranks of various supplemental regiments of the line, forming most of them into battalions by themselves, with French officers in command. "Eh bien, ils marcheront!" replied Napoleon on some difficulty of international law in regard to their enrolment being suggested in his presence. "C'est une loi de rigueur. Il vaut mieux suivre la conscription sous l'aigle Français que sous l'aigle Prussien ou Allemande." Among Wellington's Peninsular War trophies, now at Chelsea Hospital, are the flags of two of the Prussian battalions so enrolled.

They bear inscriptions that are still decipherable. One flag, that in the best state of preservation, bears on one side the words, originally painted on in gold letters, "L'Empereur des Français au Régiment Prussien." On the other side, in a lozenge-shaped white space, bordered red and blue in the corners of the flag, are the words, "Valeur et Discipline," with underneath, "3me Bataillon." The second flag is in a much faded and tattered condition. The words "Empereur des Français au Régiment Prussien" can be made out on it on one side; of the inscription on the other side only this lettering remains, "eur," "Discipline," and "Bataillon." The battalion number has peeled off or been torn away, or has rotted away in the course of years.

Polish and Russian prisoners taken at Austerlitz provided Napoleon with the nucleus of his famous (or from the point of view of Wellington's men in Spain, infamous) Polish Legion, which was first organized in September, 1806.* The Polish Legion kept on growing in numbers until it comprised twelve regiments of infantry, six of cavalry (the celebrated Polish Lancers), and nine batteries of artillery. Swedes, and many of the Austrian prisoners from the Wagram campaign, were also drafted compulsorily into the ranks of the Polish Legion. Albanians and Greeks from Corfu, with prisoners from among the former soldiers of the army of Venice, were rounded up into a Dalmatian Legion. A Hanoverian Legion was put together from all the surrendered soldiers of King George's former Hanoverian army which Napoleon could get hold of, and former troops of the Hanse cities, the Hanoverians being those unable to escape across the North Sea and join the "King's German Legion," raised in England from among their more fortunate comrades, which did such excellent service under Wellington in Spain and at Waterloo.

* See the author's chapter "On the Day of the 'Die Hards,'" in "The Soldiers whom Wellington Led."

There was, too, the Irish Legion, first raised among refugees from Emmet's "United Irishmen" (with others who had escaped across the Channel after the rising of '98) in November, 1803. For its recruiting Napoleon during 1804 and 1805 sent secret agents over to Ireland to enlist and ship men across to France by stealth. The corps had an Eagle granted it, and each of its battalions carried a green flag bearing a dedicatory inscription and the legend "L'Indépendance d'Irlande."* To keep up the numbers of the Irish Legion persistent efforts were made to seduce the British prisoners in France between 1805 and 1808, and in Spain also, during the earlier part of the Peninsular War—downright ill-treatment even being had recourse to often, as will be related, to force British prisoners taken in the field to forswear their allegiance and take service under the green flag.† Napoleon himself, for a special reason, ordered the practice to cease at the end of 1810. "I don't want any more English soldiers enlisted," he wrote to Marshal Soult in Spain. "I prefer them being kept prisoners, to set off against my men who are prisoners in England; besides, the majority of them only desert back again."

It was on the unfortunate Spaniards, those in particular made prisoners at the time of the rising of 1808 and during the earlier years of the Peninsular War, that Napoleon's hand fell heaviest of all. They were largely the remnant of regular soldiers of the old Spanish army remaining in the country and the volunteer regiments and irregulars forming the patriot forces which attempted time after time to confront the French on the battlefield, almost invariably with disastrous consequences to themselves. The prisoners taken were marked down as special objects

* See the story of the Irish Legion's Eagle in "The War Drama of the Eagles," by the author.

† Something more of that in detail is told on later pages of this book, among the personal experiences of certain British officers while prisoners. See in particular pp. 27, 65, 69-72, 103-5, 187, 213.

of French vengeance, and suffered accordingly. Napoleon, indeed, subjected his Spanish captives to terrible atrocities, consistently displaying towards them an animosity that was pitiless in its savagery, meting out to them the most abominable cruelties from sheer vindictiveness.

At the outset of the French occupation of Spain, the best regiments of Spanish regulars, to the number of 15,000 men, were got out of the way by being sent to the other side of Europe, to form garrisons in Lübeck and Swedish Pomerania and in Holstein. An equal number of good troops were marched off to Italy to do garrison duty there. The regiments that were left in the country were to be disbanded, with the exception of the Walloon Guards, formerly recruited in the Spanish Netherlands, and 11,000 Swiss mercenaries at that time in the Spanish service, which Napoleon directed were to be merged in the French army.

Such was the military position in Spain in regard to the national forces when the popular revolt of May, 1808, broke out, immediately after which came the surrender of Dupont's corps at Baylen, in Andalusia, cut off and trapped among the mountains by a sudden concentration of some of the troops left behind and local guerilla bands. From that time onwards Napoleon treated the Spaniards whom he took prisoners with deliberate barbarity, making them the victims of the most outrageous ill-treatment.

The prisoners first taken were kept for a time herded together behind iron bars on board old frigate hulks at Bayonne, until the arrangements for their disposal elsewhere had been completed. As more and more prisoners arrived, the hulks were emptied and the wretched Spaniards tramped off to their destinations. They were marched away in convoys of a thousand prisoners at a time, guarded by gendarmes and soldiers who had instructions to shoot without mercy should any of the prisoners even show a sign of wanting to escape. "L'ordre est," describes a French officer attached to one of the Spanish

convoys, "de faire feu sur quiconque tente de s'évader. Au marche, les soldats fusillent sans ménagements tous ceux qui paraissent avoir l'idèe d'échapper." "On the march once," relates somebody else, telling of an incident that took place when a train of prisoners was marching in company with a column of French troops, "a cavalry General, Boussard, imagining himself insulted by the looks of a Spanish General, told a *voltigeur* to shoot the officer dead on the spot. The soldier fired and killed the Colonel's Adjutant, who had thrust himself in front and received the bullet."

An ex-English soldier, taken in Sir John Moore's retreat to Corunna, who subsequently abandoned his nationality and became personal servant to General Kellermann, told this to Captain Boothby of the Royal Engineers, who met him while the Captain was on his way to France as a prisoner on parole. "Lord," said the man, in talking to Boothby, "when the poor devils be tired and sick and can't come on, they'll take 'em behind a house and put a couple of balls through 'em in a minute!" "This fact," adds Captain Boothby, referring to what he himself saw while on his way as one of a convoy of prisoners from Madrid to the frontier, "which all the inhabitants have unceasingly affirmed, is too well corroborated by the carcasses of Spanish soldiers on the road, upon whose bodies the uniform declares their nation, and the wounds the manner of their death. . . . The reasons of policy alleged for these monstrous massacres," proceeds the Captain, "is that, if those wretches were left sick on the road, they would only serve to strengthen the brigands."

Captain Boothby describes also how, while he was on his journey, allowed to travel in a carriage because of his wound, he saw some recaptured prisoners treated.

"We soon came up with the rear of the convoy, which is at halt. A musket goes off in front! 'It is finished,' cries a French soldier, laughing. Again!—two!—three!—four!—five!—six!—seven! I let down the glass and

say to Stephens (another British officer prisoner), who is walking, 'What the deuce is all that? Are we in action with the brigands?' 'No!' says he, with a black look, 'they're shooting the Spanish prisoners!' Again!—eight!—nine! 'Holy God, pardon us!' cries a French soldier. 'Oh, cursed Commandant!' exclaims a French woman. We are penetrated with horror, but hang on the hope that bullocks have been the victims, not men. Moving on, however, we pass the lifeless bodies of two unhappy wretches, who have thus required so many bullets to despatch them. Close to the scene of action is the murderous director. I look out of the opposite window. Stephens looks at him without acknowledgment. Now he rides up to the window, bowing and complimenting. . . . He says, 'I have just been shooting two rascals! (Swears.) Thirty of the Spanish prisoners have hid themselves in the wine-caves, where the devil himself could not find them. (Swears.) I caught these two—(swears)—and have made them an example to the rest. (Swears.)'"

The British Captain also speaks of his "amazement as well as horror that the French soldiers have attained that pitch of human butchery which enables them to murder, without emotion, amidst the easy cheerful fellowship of a peaceful journey, numbers of poor wretches whose only crime is to be sinking under disease, nakedness, hunger, and fatigue."

The most wickedly treated of all the Spanish prisoners were the heroic defenders of Saragossa and Gerona. Granted special terms on surrender, together with the honours of war, every stipulation made with them was shamelessly violated. Twelve thousand pale and emaciated Spaniards, exhausted and staggering from fatigue after undergoing fifty days of fierce fighting in open trenches, and six weeks of yet more desperate house to house fighting in the streets, amid all the horrors of virulent pestilence, surrendered at Saragossa. Not six thousand reached the Pyrenees on the way to France. Some

of the others managed to escape, but most of the missing six thousand had been shot on the way. "Three to four hundred a day perished," we are told, killed either for trying to escape, or because the wretched, worn-out creatures were incapable of keeping up along the line of march: "lorsqu'ils ne peuvent pas marcher on les fusille."

In France the survivors were dealt with very much as the Prussians of the Jena campaign had been treated on their refusal to slave for their captors. They were summarily packed off in droves and distributed along the western coast of France, where they were made to labour like ordinary convicts—it was one of the authorized punishments for civil criminals—in laying down roads, building embankments, and draining marshes. As with the refractory Prussians, again, a large number of the surviving defenders of Saragossa were sent to the north and cantoned for work at making dams and sluices among the pestilential swamps of Walcheren; in a climate so dreary and inclement, and considered indeed so unhealthy by Napoleon himself, that the French troops garrisoning the district were not allowed to be quartered nearer than at Ghent. Whether the ill-fated Spaniards lived or died was held to be of no account. They were, wrote Napoleon, when laying down the measures to be taken with regard to employing them, "des fanatiques qui n'exigent aucun ménagement." Others of the Saragossa prisoners were set on dyke-building, and reclamation works among the swampy flats of North Holland and Zealand, where the miserable wretches "died in the winter like flies."

The treatment of the 4,300 Spanish prisoners of the Gerona garrison was the same—the penalty imposed on brave men who had held out during a siege of seven months, starving and fever-stricken, while they kept at bay 17,000 French troops with 180 cannon, and at the last only laid down their arms on being granted, on paper, honourable terms.

The treatment of the Spaniards of Saragossa and Gerona, it should be said though, was hardly worse in its sheer inhumanity than the penalty Napoleon exacted on other occasions where he met with unexpected resistance; than that which he inflicted, for example, on the prisoners captured at Stralsund, the surrendered survivors of the Prussian Colonel Schill's attempted rising, who were sent in chains as *forçats* to the *bagne* of Brest and the galleys of Toulon.

As Spanish prisoners in increasing numbers fell into the hands of the French after the defeats of the patriot armies of Blake and Castaños and other leaders, they were interned in out of the way places in Central and South-Eastern France, being made to earn their keep by daily labour in factories and field employment, and on various public works, where they were kept to their tasks in gangs with armed warders standing over them, generally National Guards, one soldier having charge of ten Spaniards.

The Spaniards on field and factory labour went about their tasks, we are told, sullenly and stolidly, holding aloof from intercourse with the French people. Sickness was rife among them everywhere, and numbers succumbed to their hardships and the climate of the places where they were quartered; "the mortality was terrible; the Castilians could not endure the damp climate of Poitou; the Valencians perished by hundreds in the cold Jura and rainy Cevennes." To this day there are few cemeteries all over Central and South-Eastern France without their "Spanish Corner," where the ill-fated victims of Napoleon's vengeance from across the Pyrenees lie thickly beneath the soil.

Most of the Spanish officers were kept separated from the men, confined in various fortified places in Central France and in Languedoc. They occupied themselves, a great number of them, in making translations of French literature. As a rule, where they were allowed

to congregate, they kept stiffly apart from one another; Castilians declining to associate with fellow-prisoners from La Mancha; Aragonese having nothing to do with brother-officers from Valencia or Catalonia.

Napoleon served Russia after Eylau and Friedland in much the same way that he had served Austria in regard to the Ulm and Austerlitz prisoners. At first, immediately after Tilsit, he announced his intention of displaying extreme magnanimity towards his Russian captives. "My intention is," wrote he in a communication to Paris, "that all the Russian prisoners in France be entirely clothed in new uniforms and re-armed, and so sent back to Russia." "Que vous fassiez habiller à neuf ces prisonniers avec leur uniforme, voulant les renvoyer en Russie parfaitement habillés et armés," were his words. A few weeks later, however, he changed his mind, swinging right round. The insistent Russian demand for the restitution of a number of Poles whom Napoleon had already incorporated in his Polish Legion was, it would appear, the cause of his change of mind.

After that Napoleon put forward, by way of countermove, an assertion on all fours with the charges he had launched against Austria in 1806. The Russian authorities, he roundly declared, had only returned a portion of the French prisoners in their hands. Until they were all returned, announced Napoleon, he would not part with a single man of his Russian prisoners. With insolent hardihood he went on then to complain that according to the French regimental returns no fewer than 7,000 of his men, known to have been taken prisoners, had not been accounted for. The figures were false on their face—a deliberate concoction. Napoleon further, in the course of the correspondence, made the ugly suggestion—again a lie—that many of his soldiers whom the Russians had already returned had been maltreated while in captivity. A deadlock in the negotiations ensued, on which Napoleon openly announced his intention of not returning a single

Russian prisoner: "Mon intention est qu'on n'accorde aux Russes aucun prisonnier." Orders were thereupon issued that the 6,000 Russian prisoners actually in French hands should be drafted into the Neapolitan army. They were eventually sent to serve in Catalonia as part of the Neapolitan contingent operating against the insurrectionary Spaniards. In the end the matter was left where it stood. Apparently the St. Petersburg authorities, finding Napoleon obdurate in regard to the Poles, decided, after a good deal of more or less heated correspondence with the French War Office, not to bother further over the fate of the men, who, most of them, were after all only peasant serfs! The French prisoners all the time had not numbered more than about three thousand, taken principally at Eylau, in the February battle; and the majority of them had died from cold and exposure while being marched through the snow to Wilna and Grodno under the lances of the Cossacks.

The batches of Swedish soldiers made prisoners along the Baltic coast during the Eylau campaign Napoleon treated as he had done their allies the Prussians. He made use of most of them in like manner to plough the fields and labour on public works for their conquerors in place of French conscripts sent to the front. Others he enlisted and despatched to Spain.

After Wagram, at the close of the second Austrian War, for nearly eighteen months Napoleon repeated his former trickery with regard to the prisoners he had in his hands: this time in round numbers some twenty thousand. The Austrian prisoners were all kept back, interned in France, in defiance of the stipulation for their immediate exchange against the French prisoners in the Treaty of Vienna. Napoleon's marriage to Marie Louise was a dynastic affair: it made no difference in regard to the Austrian prisoners. Napoleon, after the treaty had been signed, while holding back the Austrian prisoners, with shameless effrontery demanded as a preliminary to his release of

them, not only the return of all French prisoners in Austrian hands, but also the turning out of Austria of a number of other persons. He insisted on the discharge from the Austrian service of all natives of territories ceded to France by the Treaty of Vienna (which involved the transfer of allegiance of three and a half millions of people) before, Napoleon declared, he would give up a single man. More than that, he insisted on the handing over of ten thousand "subjects of the French Empire," as Napoleon designated them, then serving in the Austrian army: *émigrés* Belgians (natives of the former Austrian Netherlands territory), French deserters, and others. For eighteen months the French and Austrian diplomatists exchanged notes, until in the end, in despair, the Austrian Government gave in to the French demands. All that Napoleon would allow was the conceding of one or two minor points, such as the according of military rank corresponding with that held by them in the Austrian army to *émigrés* who should volunteer for service with the Eagles, and the amnestying of the French deserters. It was only at the end of the year 1810, indeed, that the prisoners of the Wagram campaign were returned. As before with their Ulm comrades, before they recrossed the Rhine, the Austrians had to run the gauntlet of Napoleon's recruiting agents and crimps.

Between ten and fifteen thousand Russians were made prisoners in the opening skirmishes and combats of the Moscow campaign of 1812. Napoleon tried to effect an exchange of prisoners with the Russians, and Marshal Berthier, the Chief of the Staff of the Grand Army, during the advance after the battle at Smolensk, twice sent proposals to Barclay, the Russian Commander-in-Chief, under a flag of truce: but no notice whatever was taken of the proposals; no reply was forthcoming. The prisoners after that were marched across the Niemen—all who attempted to escape on the way being ruthlessly shot down on the spot. "Tous ceux qui seront trouvés hors

du rang chercher à déserter seront fusillés" ran Napoleon's pitiless order to the convoy commanders. The Russians were then shut up in the fortresses of Dantzic, Modlin, Marienburg, and Thorn, and kept there until the late autumn of that year, when they were moved on to France, to be confined under lock and key in various fortified places in Alsace and Lorraine, until, on the advance of the Allies in the spring of 1814, they were removed south of the Loire. The 5,000 prisoners odd made at Borodino and in cavalry affairs round Moscow experienced yet worse things. They were started off to France, escorted by Spanish and Portuguese troops, on October 13, a week before Napoleon evacuated Moscow; but it is doubtful whether a single man of them survived the journey. Numbers succumbed to the hardships of the march, dying by the wayside from exposure: "ayant jalonné la route de leur corps." Others of the ill-fated Russians, who could not, or would not, keep up with their convoys, were shot like dogs along the road. "On fusillent plusieurs qui ne veulent pas marcher," describes one of the French officers. A similar doom, as other of the French officers in the retreat relate, was the lot of the Russian prisoners taken in the first fighting after the Grand Army quitted Moscow. When the French columns broke up amid the general demoralization, most of the prisoners yet alive tried to escape, and were killed, being shot dead in the snow.

Not very many prisoners, some five thousand all told, and most of them Prussians, fell into Napoleon's hands during the spring campaign of 1813 in Northern Germany. About three thousand of these were taken at Lützen and Bautzen; the rest were the produce of skirmishes in various places, or were picked up as stragglers from Free Corps, recruits on the way to camp, or Landwehr militiamen intercepted in small parties.

Napoleon's last great haul of prisoners took place at the opening of the autumn campaign of the same year, and

immediately after the Battle of Dresden. According to official returns, now preserved among the archives of the Minister of War in Paris, Napoleon held, on November 8, ten days before the crowning overthrow of Leipsic, no fewer than 23,518 prisoners—Austrians, Russians, and Prussians. Some thirteen thousand of these were Austrians made prisoners in the fighting at Dresden. They were paraded in triumph through the city in the evening after the battle, when Napoleon made his public entry as the victor. This was the scene as the people of Dresden saw it. "At 4 p.m., Napoleon, wet to the skin, with the famous cocked hat reduced to pulp by the rain and hanging limply about his ears and about his neck, rode through the Dippoldiswalde suburb to the palace. Behind him marched 1,000 Austrian prisoners; later on, 12,000 more came in from beyond the Weisseritz, including Meszko, two other Generals, sixty-four officers of high, and many of lower rank. Fifteen Austrian standards were borne by the grenadiers of the Old Guard; twenty-six guns, and thirty ammunition wagons followed."

It was intended, though, that there should be yet further humiliation for the Dresden prisoners of Napoleon. It was proposed to turn them to account in an exceptional way. Napoleon specially directed that they should be made use of as a kind of advertisement throughout France that all was going well with the Grand Army at the front. During the first week of October he had the prisoners collected from all quarters at Dresden, until the whole 23,000 odd were assembled. Orders were issued that they should be formed into convoys which were to be marched forthwith to France, to be paraded there in triumph to the music of drums and trumpets through the streets of the principal cities and towns, in order that the sight should hearten up the people and restore general confidence in the fortunes of the Emperor.

The prisoners were carefully sorted out and started off in separate detachments: first the higher officers, the

Generals and Colonels by themselves, in batches of twenty escorted by gendarmes; then similar convoys of other officers, Majors and Captains, and also independent convoys of Lieutenants. The captured soldiers were sent off after that, formed in companies of from sixty to a hundred men, ten companies being massed as a convoy. To guard against attempts at rescue, in the disturbed state of the district through which they had to pass in Western Germany, each convoy was strongly guarded by ten gendarmes, twenty dragoons, and sixty infantrymen; practically one guard to every nine prisoners.

Only a handful of the prisoners, however, crossed the Rhine. The convoy escorts were harassed as they passed through Saxony by parties of Klenau's dragoons and Thielemann's light horse, who, a short time before that, had been sent with Platoff's Cossacks to over-run the country beyond the Elbe and raid Napoleon's line of communications. In these attacks some two-thirds of the prisoners were liberated, after which what was left of the convoys and their escorts were fallen on as they traversed Hesse, where every wood along the main roads held sharp-shooters or roving bands of patriot volunteers, prowling about to carry on a partisan warfare with the French conscript columns and baggage trains on the march to the front. Nearly all the remaining prisoners were so rescued. Their escorts were dispersed, most of the French soldiers being slaughtered there and then, for quarter was but rarely given. In a few cases the convoy escorts were able to fight their way past their assailants until they could take refuge with the nearest French garrison, bringing in with them a remnant of their prisoners; but not three hundred of the Dresden captives ever reached France.

A number of Austrian prisoners were taken on the first day of the fighting before Leipsic. Napoleon kept hold of them. They were hastened across the bridge over the Elster during the night before the final catastrophe, and

were carried along with the wreck of the retreating army. Some 4,000 more prisoners, Bavarians mostly, together with a few Austrians, were taken in the Battle of Hanau on the Mayence road, where the Bavarian General Wrede, tried to bar Napoleon's way to the Rhine. These prisoners reached France, and were sent off to be cantoned beyond the Loire with the Russians taken in August, 1812.

Most of them had just got to their destinations when hostilities closed in April, 1814.

The last prisoners made by Napoleon were some 5,000 Russians, Prussians, and Bavarians, captured from Blücher at the Battle of Champaubert in February, 1814. They also were started off for Central France, but they did not get very far on their way. The end of the war came while they were still slowly dragging their way among the disordered French troops which everywhere blocked the roads.*

However abominably on occasion Napoleon dealt with many of his British prisoners of war, his treatment of them as a whole cannot be compared with the merciless

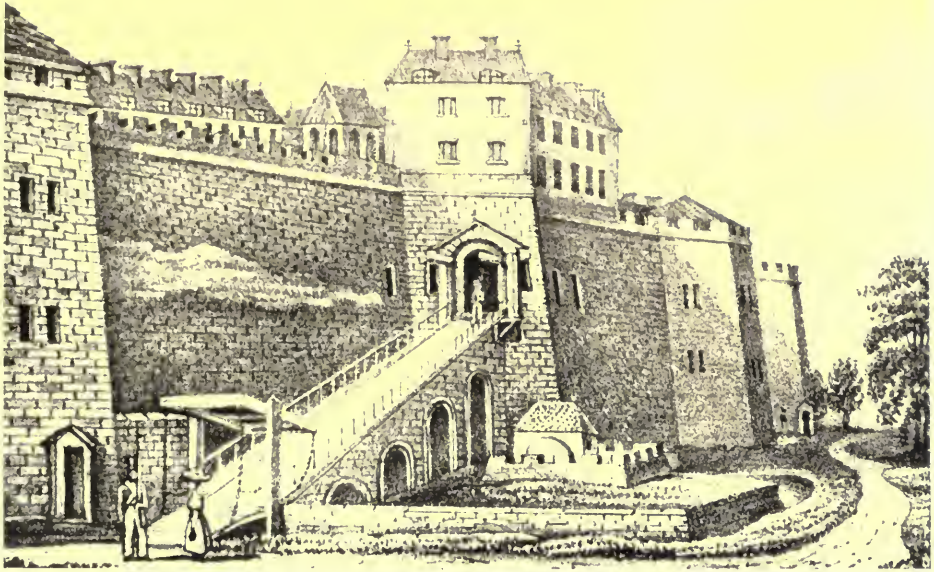
* The principal authorities consulted in connection with the foregoing chapter are these: "Correspondance de Napoléon" (Military), *passim;* "Correspondance de Roi Joseph," *passim;* Blaze, "La Vie Militaire sous le Premier Empire"; Castellane, "Journal"; Bigarré, "Mémoires"; Larrey, "Journal"; D'Hauterive, "Lettres d'un Chef de Brigade"; Montgaillard, "Hist. de France"; Savary, "Mémoires"; Girod, "Dix Ans de Souvenirs Militaires"; Percy, "Journal"; Gonneville, "Souvenirs"; Thirion, "Journal Historique"; Miot de Mélito, "Mémoires"; De Reiset, "Souvenirs"; De Suckow, "Fragments de ma vie"; Lahure, "Souvenirs"; Foucart, "Iéna"; Dupuy, "Souvenirs Militaires"; De Comeau, "Souvenirs des Guerres Allemands"; Hulot, "Souvenirs Militaires"; Girault, "Mes Campagnes sous la Republique et l'Empire"; Berthezène, "Souvenirs Militaires"; Noel, "Souvenirs Militaires"; Brandt, "Souvenirs d'un Officier Polonais"; Toreno, "Hist. de la Guerre de la Revolution d'Espagne"; Fabry, "Campagne de Russie"; De Chambray, "Campagne de Russie"; La Rochechouart, "Mémoires"; Gourgaud, "Mémoires de Napoleon"; Soltyk, "Napoléon en 1812"; Vionnet, "Souvenirs d'un Commandant des Grenadiers de la Vieille Garde"; Combes, "Mémoires"; Gross, "Souvenirs Inédits de Napoléon."

and inhuman ill-usage his captives taken in the wars on the Continent had to submit to. Yet, all said and done, the lot of Napoleon's British prisoners of war was hard enough, exposed as they were to the malice and spite and rancorous hate of ill-conditioned and tyrannical depôt-Commandants.

To that story we now pass.

HOW THE BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR ORDINARILY FARED

NAPOLEON concentrated his British prisoners of war in the North and North-East of France, Verdun being the head-centre depôt. It was the main entrepôt, or collecting base, whence prisoners of war, as they arrived from all quarters, were distributed to their various places of confinement. The officers were mostly kept interned together at Verdun, where also most of the midshipmen and the merchantship skippers and mates taken by privateers were held in captivity. Sailors, naval and merchantship, made prisoners at sea by French frigates and privateers, the victims of shipwreck, or captured in other ways on the shores of the Channel and the Bay of Biscay, in the neighbourhood of Toulon and Genoa, or along the Italian Mediterranean coast, or got hold of in like manner in the Adriatic, as well as the British soldiers captured during the Peninsular War in Spain and elsewhere, were first of all marched to Verdun, previous to being divided up and sent, some to Arras, Valenciennes, and Cambray; others—the bulk of the lower-deck prisoners and rank and file—to Givet and Charlemont on the Meuse, close to the Belgian frontier; and, in smaller bodies, to overflow depôts at Phalsbourg, Sarrebourg, Epinal, Metz, Longwy, Briançon, and Nancy. From these depôts prisoners who were disorderly or attempted to escape were sent to the punishment depôts of Bitche, Sedan, or Sarrelouis, for rigorous confinement in the dungeons there. Between these places shiftings of the prisoners in batches, from one fortress to another, were also constantly going on, as



ENTRANCE GATEWAY TO THE FORT OF BITCHE

From a contemporary drawing by a British prisoner of war

one means of foiling plots to escape, by preventing the prisoners congregating too long and getting to know one another.

The British prisoners of war, sailors and soldiers and merchantship skippers and seamen, all of these—except naval and military officers on parole, who were allowed to travel independently*—were tramped across France to Verdun in gangs and convoys, escorted by gendarmes or soldiers, according to the number of prisoners, being passed along in custody from one district to another. Under the Napoleonic regime all France was mapped out for police purposes in a network of artificial squares, each some fifteen or twenty miles wide, and to each of which a brigade of gendarmes was allotted. In turn, the several districts handed on the prisoner-convoys from one to another, each district passing them on to the next adjoining along the road.

Every convoy was mustered and checked off before being handed on to its next custodians, also wherever it passed the night. "We walked always between twenty and thirty miles," describes one captive, "and on entering any town where we were to pass the night we were drawn up in rank and file and called over. . . . The same form of calling over took place again next morning."

Along the road the treatment of the prisoners depended entirely on the disposition of the gendarmes, their custodians—usually rough and brutal fellows. "It was too often the case," describes a British naval officer, who, as many did, had refused to give his parole, preferring to share the lot of his men, in speaking of one detail of a march of which he himself was an eye-witness, "that the

* "Prisoners of war having the rank of officers, as well as hostages (*détenus*)," directed Napoleon in a special decree for British officers, dated Paris, August 5, 1811, "shall enjoy the favour of proceeding freely and without escort to the place assigned to them to reside, and shall not be detained by the way on giving their parole not to depart from the route marked out for them, or to leave their place of residence without authority."

prisoners, being without shoes, became so lame as to be incapable of marching. They were then driven on at the point of the sabre, sometimes being dragged along by being attached to the horse, and at length, when utterly incapable of proceeding, they were deposited in the next prison until able to march."

Small parties of prisoners, up to a dozen in number as a rule, were normally escorted by two mounted gendarmes, the prisoners being sometimes handcuffed in pairs, and even roped together. At night they were locked up in barns or disused buildings, "often without roofs, containing mud and pools of water," as often as not in the common gaols of the towns where they had to halt; places for the most part filthy and damp, foul-smelling, and usually swarming with vermin, and sometimes already tenanted by French convicts and other criminals, among whom our men were thrust indiscriminately.

Midshipman O'Brien, of the frigate *Hussar*, wrecked off the coast of Brittany in the early part of 1804, in his account of how he and the rest of the ship's company were marched from Brest to Verdun, relates that in some places, when the prisoners complained of the abominable hovels in which they were lodged at night, all the answer they got was to be sworn at and told that any hole was good enough for English dogs like them. In one of the larger towns, a fortified place, all of them, he tells us, were thrust into the underground dungeons of the citadel. It was bitterly cold weather, but so scanty was the supply of straw provided for the men's bedding that the officers had to buy more at their own expense, and to pay a shamefully exorbitant price for it. "In this straw they enjoyed what warmth they could, making it into ropes, and twisting it round their exhausted limbs and bodies."

O'Brien also describes how, at some places, when the prisoners' convoy with which he was marching arrived at their destination for the night before it was dark, they were all paraded in the market-place and made a spectacle

for the people of the town to gloat over and mock at before being taken to their quarters in the gaol. He tells us further this ugly story of an attempt that was made to get his men to turn traitors. It took place at Rouen, in the gaol, where the captive crew of the *Hussar* had been shut up on their arrival on the previous evening. "At about eleven o'clock some French naval officers came to inspect our people, and gave some of them pieces of money, with an intention to induce them to enter the French service. This I saw, as it was publicly done in the gaol-yard, and I happened to be looking out of the window at the time. I desired them to be particular in what they were about. One man, a Dane (Hendrick Wilson, a very fine fellow, upwards of six feet high, who had been taken by us and had volunteered into our service), replied: 'We will take what money they choose to give us, sir, and that shall be all they will gain by coming here.'"

One shocking display of deliberate barbarity to three prisoners who were being marched to Verdun by themselves in charge of a gendarme, is also recorded by Captain Sir Jahleel Brenton, of the wrecked frigate *Minerve*, some of whose personal experiences while in captivity are related farther on. The three prisoners were a naval Captain, a Major of marines, and a Bermuda planter, captured while returning to England on board a merchantman.

"They were landed at one of the ports of the western coast of France, and, notwithstanding their rank in life, were marched in the same manner as common seamen from brigade to brigade, and like them confined in the common prison of the place where they halted for the night. Upon one occasion, after being placed in the *cachot* and shown the straw upon which they had to pass the night, a fierce mastiff was brought into the place. The prisoners were told that if they lay perfectly quiet during the night they would not be molested, but if they attempted to get up the dog would seize them; and as

proof of this not being mentioned only to alarm them, whenever they rustled the straw the dog growled. The situation of the prisoners during the long night may be imagined. Complaint was made by these gentlemen on their arrival at Verdun, but no redress was granted them."

On the other hand, this in fairness must be said.

Along the route in many places, we are told, once the coast districts had been left behind, the country and village people were often disposed to show themselves well disposed and indeed hospitable to the British prisoners as they passed. In coast towns they were often jeered at and abused and even pelted with mud, the gendarmes in charge calmly looking on and seldom troubling even to remonstrate. Inland, on the contrary, compassion for the wretched condition of the prisoners was rather the prevailing note among the peasantry, their sympathy being accompanied often by acts of generosity. The wayside cottage-folk, too, we learn also, were not seldom ready to help men who were sick or footsore. "The people were kind to our prisoners when found lame or sick on the road and incapable of continuing their march, taking them into their houses, and sending to the nearest gendarmes' post, so as not to be accused of harbouring deserters, and to get leave for the prisoners to remain till cured."

The townspeople, also, in whose houses the officers were now and again billeted, were ordinarily civil-spoken and friendly in their manner; but, as one officer records, "with few exceptions their charges for food were outrageous and dishonest." Worse still, in regard to this matter of over-charging, were the inn-keepers, when the officers were permitted, in some of the smaller towns, to lodge for the night at an inn. The inn-keepers, we are told, proved, in nine cases out of ten, disgraceful rogues, imposing abominably on the prisoners, and replying to their protests with insolence and abuse. The British officers had to pay the charges, there was no

help for it: the French Commandants of the escort very rarely troubled to intervene or protect those in their charge from the shameless fleecing.

Everything depended on the men put in control of the prisoner convoys. Nine out of ten of the gendarmes told off to take charge of the smaller parties of prisoners showed themselves callous brutes. Very few indeed, here and there, treated our men with anything approaching consideration. In like manner was it with the larger prisoner columns, where detachments of regulars, generally cavalry, had the escort duty. Some of the officers in command, however, proved good-natured fellows, and were courteous to the British officers marching with their convoys, and humane to the men. One of these last Midshipman O'Brien tells us about: an officer of cuirassiers who had charge of the prisoners from the *Hussar* during part of their journey to Verdun.

"This officer," remarks O'Brien, "appeared to be a very affable, good kind of person, of the true old French school before the character of the inhabitants had been demoralized by the Revolution." The kindly cuirassier officer went out of his way on several occasions during the march to show friendliness to the prisoners under his charge. At one town he gave the midshipmen of the party a breakfast at his own expense. "The next morning," relates O'Brien, "our kind officer astonished us by a most elegant breakfast, consisting of everything that the small town could supply. We had made it a point never to allow him to pay any of his personal or table expenses when he conducted us to an inn, and his breakfast was given, I suppose, much to his honour as a complimentary requital."

The gallant French cuirassier showed himself on other occasions a kindly and generous man.

"On our way through the Pas de Calais," continues O'Brien, recording another incident of the journey, "the road was excessively dirty and bad. Our men were so

exceedingly weak this day, the weather being very severe and raining so incessantly, that our good officer made some of his cuirassiers take three or four of their prisoners behind on their horses."

Again, as O'Brien relates, this same officer took the midshipmen, on the convoy's arrival in one town, after a day of drenching rain, to the best inn in the place, where, finding a large company of townsfolk assembled to enjoy themselves in front of a good fire in the biggest room of the inn, he made them give way for the lads to get close to the fire and dry themselves, afterwards seeing that they were provided with a good supper.

The senior gendarme in charge of each gang of prisoners, or senior military officer in charge of the convoy, where there were sufficient prisoners to require a military guard, carried with him the official *dossier*, or register, of the prisoners, bearing particulars of each man set down on paper for the information of the Commandant of the depôt, for delivery on handing over his charge at the "review" of the batch of prisoners held on arrival. It was drawn up in this form:

Name and address of prisoner and of his parents - -	.....
Birth-place and age of prisoner - -	....
Name of the ship or corps to which he belonged - -	.....
Rank - - -	.....
Corresponding rank in the French Army -	....
Date on which he was made prisoner, and name of place -	.....

These ordinarily were in outline the standing orders at the different depôts for the British prisoners of war, as originally issued by the Minister of War in Paris. Certain variations were made in the regulations from time to time, in regard to matters of detail mostly. They need not be gone into here.

The officers were allowed liberty within the limits of the fortresses where they were interned, junior officers, who were on restricted parole, being required for the first six months of captivity to present themselves at "appel" or roll-call at the Hôtel de Ville twice a day; at eight in the morning and four in the afternoon. They were permitted to go about where they liked within the town every day, and within certain hours could in most places walk for exercise on the ramparts. All had to be in their lodgings by nine at night, when the great bell of the cathedral or principal church tolled, unless specially exempted by the Lieutenant of Police, who usually acted at each depôt as Second in Command. Those allowed outside the fortress walls for the day, for sporting or pleasure parties when permitted, had to leave their passports at the gate and reclaim them on re-entry; in six hours' time for senior officers, or in four hours' or two hours' for others, according to the class of prisoner. After the first six months, in the case of junior officers, mates, and midshipmen, three calls daily were held at 8 a.m., noon, and 8 p.m., as before. This was in order to render escapes more difficult; it being assumed that by that time, as they had become familiarized with their surroundings, they would get impatient at being kept in durance, and would be likely to attempt escape. If out of their lodgings at night, the prisoners' landlords had to report their absence the first thing next morning, under penalty of a fine. Prisoners absenting themselves from roll-call were liable to summary arrest and confinement to their quarters for periods varying from twenty-four hours to eight days, with a fine at

the discretion of the Commandant. Longer periods in close arrest and under sentry were the penalties for cases where absentee prisoners gave trouble, short of offering violence to the gendarmes sent to find them. Violence to a gendarme entailed a sentence of deportation to a punishment depôt.

Senior officers on parole—they were all kept at Verdun —were after a time exempted from the daily roll-call, and had only to sign their names in the Commandant's book once every five days. They were allowed to walk or ride unattended to a distance of six miles from the gates of the fortress, within certain stated hours. The privilege was extended to other officers on particular occasions.

All officers were liable to summary arrest and confinement for acts considered by the authorities to be a breach of parole, at the instance of the Commandant or the Mayor. In general they were allowed to occupy their time as each might wish. Allowances, ranging from £4 a month, as subsistence and lodging-money, were made by the French Government to Colonels and Post-Captains of the Navy; and smaller sums to the junior commissioned officers, both naval and military. Midshipmen got fifty sous daily, and petty officers eleven, down to three sous a day for soldiers and sailors and for merchant-ship officers and hands; a sum cruelly inadequate for the poor skippers and mates, whose status the French Government refused to recognize. Considerable hardship was caused by the payments being often in arrear, while, in addition, in some cases where the junior officers were concerned, dishonest French officials found means of keeping back part of the money, coolly cheating their helpless victims who could get no redress.

At first the British prisoners were permitted to correspond with friends and relatives at home, the letters in all cases being sent open, for official perusal at the Ministry of War in Paris. The privilege, however, was summarily withdrawn in the autumn of 1806, and what private news

the prisoners got from England after that only reached them by surreptitious means, by letters conveyed through smugglers to Ostend and across Belgium by means of secret agents. Occasionally an English newspaper reached them in the same way, but ordinarily they could only learn the news of the day from the French papers, which were, of course, at that time under drastic censorship.

Prisoners of the rank and file, soldiers and sailors, naval and mercantile, whose conduct justified their being granted a species of limited parole, men in particular who had trades they could turn to account, might, it was laid down in the general regulations issued by the Ministry of War, follow their trades at a regular wage with any of the tradesmen in the fortress where they were confined who would employ them. The prisoners were to be permitted also, in some cases, to undertake work in private houses in any capacity, "on condition that their employers produced them before the authorities on demand." They had to return at night and sleep with their comrades in the depôt barracks, and once every ten days a report on these men was to be sent to the Mairie. Also officials from the Mayor were at intervals to pay domiciliary visits of inspection, at which the prisoners employed, workmen, or servants, must be paraded. Part of their earnings the prisoners might keep; the bulk was to go to a general Clothing Fund at the Ministry of War for the benefit of all the prisoners. So it was laid down on paper in Paris.

In practice, things were different. The regulations were optional for the depôt-Commandants to adopt or alter according to circumstances, and each Commandant in consequence acted very much as he thought fit.

The greater number of the prisoners in the different fortresses were ordinarily—during the earlier years of the war certainly—kept within the bounds of their barrack squares, unable to get out at all among the townsfolk; guarded by sentries and shut in behind gates under lock and key. They had to live through their captivity in

enforced idleness as best they might, with little to do for passing the time, day after day, beyond taking part in rough and ready games and sports among themselves—gambling, and too often, as we are told, giving way to quarrelling and brawling. There were no inducements, and next to no opportunities, for the British prisoners confined in the French fortress-barracks to work at making things for sale, useful articles or nick-nacks, as the French prisoners in England did. As to that, indeed, also, there were not many of them capable of the kind of work, or disposed to occupy themselves with it. The prison depôts in France, further, were situated in out-of-the-way localities, in the poorest parts of the country, where there was nobody to buy the men's handiwork, no market at all for anything they could make.

Extra money, it may be added, was on offer to anyone who would volunteer to work on Government undertakings in the neighbourhood, under the provisions of the War Minister's "General Regulations for the Conduct of the Prison Depôts," one paragraph of which ran as follows: "The glorious campaigns of His Majesty the Emperor, having accumulated in France an immense number of prisoners of war, in order to render useful to the country those men whom war has armed against it, His Majesty the Emperor has directed that they shall, in so far as is practicable, be employed to forward either the public works or those of agriculture and the arts." No actual or open compulsion was applied in the case of the British prisoners in regard to that, as was done in the case of Napoleon's Continental prisoners in circumstances previously related—and the British prisoners everywhere refused to a man to come forward and take a hand in "doing jobs that would let the d——d frog-eaters off to go a-sojering for Boney." So one man in fact is stated to have replied to one of the French sergeants constantly hanging about at the prison gates to suggest that means of putting extra cash in their pockets to prisoners, when

an attempt was made to induce him to barter his barrack-square confinement for paid work in mending a military road near by. More about that will be said in due course.

Napoleon for his part maintained, at any rate at the outset of the war, that he was treating his British soldier and sailor prisoners with liberality; providing for their support practically on the same scale as for his own army in quarters. So he in fact declared in his correspondence with the British Government during 1804, when replying to complaints from England against certain of his prison depôt regulations. This is what Napoleon said in his answer: "Les prisonniers Anglais sont libres dans les citadelles, ils sont casernés comme les soldats; ils reçoivent le pain, une paye suffisante, et des effets de petit équipement. On leur permet de travailler en ville." "Nos prisonniers," he went on to say by way of rejoinder, making a reckless and false accusation in his characteristic way, "sont entassés en Angleterre d'une manière si pénible qu'on les force ainsi, sous peine de vie, à prendre du service; on insulte et on outrage a chaque instant les officiers et soldats." That, of course, was an entirely imaginary grievance: really it was what was being done in France to some of Napoleon's British prisoners.

Dealing with the complaint that the British prisoners were not properly clad for the climate of the places where they were confined, to which the British Government had added an offer to send over a supply of warm clothing, Napoleon loftily made this reply: "De tout temps nous avons traité les prisonniers que nous avons eus. Je ne veux rien changer. Mon intention est d'habiller les prisonniers Anglais. Ils ont une masse comme les troupes. Les Anglais doivent en faire autant," he added, hitting back. ". . . Je veux que les prisonniers Anglais ne coûtent rien aux Anglais et que ceux qu'ils pourront me faire ne me coûtent rien."

According to the "État Actuel de la Législation sur l'Administration des Troupes," issued by the Ministry of

War in 1809, under the section "Of Prisoners, Foreign Deserters, and their Keepers and Under-keepers," this distinction was officially drawn between the British and Continental prisoners of war: "The English prisoners of war belong indiscriminately to the First Class, and are allowed, daily, one pound of bread, one ration, vegetables and salt, seven centimes and a half in cash." This was the regulation allowance for a French private of the line. "The prisoners of all other nations," continues the Ministerial order, "belong to the Second Class, and receive only one half of the pay of the privates of the French Army, and one ration of bread each."

Unfortunately for the British prisoners, Napoleon changed his methods not long afterwards, on receiving a detailed statement from the Minister of War as to the provision made at the various depôts. He expressed the opinion that the arrangement was too expensive to be continued. Henceforward he laid down: "Ils ne doivent pas être aussi bien traités que les troupes." Orders were issued thereupon to curtail supplies of all kinds, and deal with the British soldiers and sailors more economically, which entailed many cruel hardships and privations on the prisoners.

Under the revised system the clothing served out to the prisoners proved often insufficient for health, short in supply, and of wretched quality. It comprised, according to regulation, "a knitted waistcoat and pantaloons, a wagoner's frock, and a hat." "A straw hat per man and coarse grey cloth coat and fustian trousers was the kit usually supplied," relates one of our officers, "with army shoes; these last generally part-worn army footwear or rejected goods from the maker's stores, which the prisoners had to patch up or make fit for themselves." Equally unsatisfactory was the supply of blankets and bedding. "They are to receive," ran the War Minister's general order, "one blanket and one paillasse for every two men, if they can be provided by the public stores; if not, they

are to receive straw, five kilogrammes per man, to be renewed every fifteen days." The blankets had been usually three-quarters worn out before the prisoners received them, coming from the returned-stores department of the French army. The supply of straw for bedding was often not sufficient to go round. Had it not been for the privately got up subscriptions among the officers and wealthier *détenus* at Verdun, to which all gave to the best of their ability, and the additional aid of sums of money from a "War Prisoners' Relief Fund" raised in England and forwarded by instalments under flag of truce from time to time, which reached the depôts through the Ministry of War in Paris, the mortality among the British prisoners of the rank and file during the winter months every year from lack of absolute necessaries of life would have been 50 per cent. heavier than it actually was. For under-clothing the prisoners had to shift for themselves; in effect, to rely on the generosity of their officers and the relief fund.

Little or no barrack-room furniture for their living quarters, or culinary utensils even in some cases, was found provided for them by prisoners on their arrival at their places of confinement. Practically everything—forms to sit on, tables for their meals, jugs and mugs, kettles and cooking-tins to dress their food in, earthenware pans to serve as plates and dishes, and so on, had to be procured by the British officers among the prisoners. The senior officer in most places contracted for what was needed with local tradesmen by means of credit notes on the British Government, which were met through grants-in-aid sent over at intervals from the Treasury in London by arrangement with the authorities in Paris. We shall hear more about that again in one of the officers' personal narratives.

This may be added, in conclusion, in regard to the general conditions of life among our unfortunate sailors and soldiers in France under Napoleon.

The prisoners at most depôts were quartered in localities that were unhealthy and bitterly cold in winter, and lodged in buildings not always in repair, causing sickness to be rife among them; while many of the weaker men contracted diseases that proved fatal. And, as has been said, the supply of food was at times neither satisfactory nor sufficient. The rations of black bread proved often not only short in quantity, but also of bad quality, sour, and uneatable; and the small portion of meat and vegetables provided for the *soup maigre* on which they had to subsist as a principal item of their dinners was poor stuff, and unsatisfying for Englishmen accustomed to solid food at home.

To supplement their short commons the hungry men at dinner-time daily besieged the barred gates of their barrack-yards to buy, as far as their three sous each would go, extra food, and drink and tobacco, from the sutlers and local small shopkeepers whom the town authorities generally permitted to congregate outside and make what money they could from the prisoners. Brandy was cheap, and the smuggling of it into the prison was not difficult, with unfortunate consequences for too many of our poor fellows. To drown their sorrows they got drunk, and, in addition to quarrelling among themselves, broke out in riotous excesses, which sometimes culminated in acts of mad insubordination, insulting and attacking their French gaolers, in the result bringing down severe punishment on their own heads: separate confinement in underground cells on bread and water, or being marched off, sometimes in mid-winter through deep snow, to expiate their offences by disciplinary confinement for lengthy periods in the dungeons of the penal depôts.

AT VERDUN—THE OFFICERS' DEPÔT

AT Verdun most of the officers were quartered on parole, together with a large number of *détenus*, Napoleon's civilian captives. These comprised the English travellers—Peers and Members of Parliament on holiday, people of fashion, business men, tradesmen, officers returning from Egypt or on leave, officials on the way home from India, invalids gone abroad for their health, and others of all sorts and conditions, many with their families—pounced down on wholesale and summarily arrested by Napoleon's orders in May, 1803, on the outbreak of war. They were to be held as "hostages," according to the term ("otages") that Napoleon used by way of excuse when ordering them to be taken into custody; as a set-off against the first captures at sea of French subjects by Great Britain. With the affairs and doings of the Verdun *détenus* we are here only concerned incidentally; where their experiences affect or have to do with the regular prisoners of war.

This, in general terms, is what the everyday life of the place was like, and how the British officers usually passed their time.

"Before the arrival of the English," we are told, "there were but three or four good shops; the others sold gingerbread and fire-matches. The *bourgeoises* dressed like servant-maids; but soon after their arrival the whole town was alive: the shops were ornamented with crystal-glass windows, as at Paris, which were filled with jewellery and the most fashionable articles of dress; and the

shopkeepers' wives and daughters were attired in silks and muslins." "Verdun," to quote a British naval officer, one of the earlier arrivals there as a prisoner, "soon began to lose the appearance of a French town; and many shops with English signs and English designations were seen, such as, 'Anderson, Grocer and Tea-Dealer, from London,' 'Stuckey, Tailor and Ladies' Habit-Maker, from London,' etc., etc. The Rue Moselle, the principal street in Verdun, got the *nom de guerre* of 'Bond Street,' and was often called by the French themselves 'Bon Street.'" Anderson and Stuckey, and other English shopkeepers at Verdun, were themselves *détenus*, London tradesmen who had been on commercial business in France when the edict was issued to arrest all the English in the country.

With regard to the exorbitant prices charged for everything, the rapacity of the townsfolk over-reached itself. Napoleon himself, indeed, got to hear of the extortionate charges during the autumn of 1804, and peremptorily directed the town authorities to take action. He had an official warning sent from Paris to the Municipality of Verdun to the effect that unless it kept down the price of lodgings, to take one detail, which had risen from 30 to 300 francs a month, the English would be sent elsewhere, which, of course, would be a serious blow to local trade. These were Napoleon's words: "Si les habitants taxent à un trop haut prix les logements des Anglais et si la Municipalité ne prend pas des mesures pour que les logements qui se louaient 30 francs quand les Anglais sont arrivés ne soient plus loués aujourdhui 300 francs, ils contraindront le Ministre de la Guerre à les placer dans une autre ville."

"There were several clubs at Verdun," describes one of the *détenus;* "the principal one was the Café Caron Club —so called from the coffee-house where it assembled. It consisted of 120 members, and was the most in the style of a club in England. Members were elected by ballot; the price, 6 *livres* the month; the vacancies in 1805 were

PLATE XXXIII. OF ATTENS, FROM TELEGRAPH HILL, SHOWING THE SEMAPHORE FOR REPORTING ESCAPES OF PRISONERS TO NEIGHBOURING GARRISONS.

filled by prisoners of war. In 1807 it was shut up by General Wirion, the then Governor of Verdun."

"Lieutenant Barker, R.N.," continues the writer, relating incidentally an act of heroism by one of the British prisoners, "was a member of this club. Being confined by illness to his room, he saw a child fall into the river; regardless of his own health, he sprang into the river and rescued the child. Some time afterwards the same gentleman saw a gendarme fall into the Meuse; he sprang in after him and saved him also. These exploits created a general and powerful sensation in his favour. The Lodge of Freemasons invited Mr. Barker to a fraternal banquet; the Prefect, who resided at Bar, came to Verdun to pay him a visit of ceremony, and the public prints all highly panegyrized his humanity and courage. Yet for three years he was unable to secure his exchange, and, we regret to add, he fell in a duel at Verdun in 1810."*

During the first four years that Verdun was a prisoners' depôt, it may be remarked, upwards of a hundred British officers and *détenus* were admitted into the Masonic Lodge there, until the authorities discovered that certain of the French Masons, as an act of brotherhood, had helped a British prisoner to escape. On that the admission of British prisoners to the Lodge was prohibited. One French Mason, indeed, at the inquiry into the circumstances of the escape of the prisoner referred to, frankly declared that if the fugitive had applied to him for help he would have felt himself bound to facilitate his getting away.

"The second club," to take up again the *détenu's* narrative, "was held at Créange's, and afterwards at an Englishman's named Taylor. It consisted of about forty members, chiefly of the most noisy and dashing young fellows of the place. This was an extravagant institu-

* See the mention of Lieutenant Barker's fatal duel in the narrative of Lieutenant R. B. James (*post*) at p. 156.

tion, where high play was practised: it was but short-lived.

"The club at the Bishop's Palace consisted of about fifty members, mostly married men, who had their wives and daughters at Verdun; and of those bachelors who were fond of women's company. A ball or card assembly was held alternately every Monday night; hours as late as at London—dinners on Christmas Day, King's Birthday, etc. Mr. Concannon was the life and soul of this society. He was also the great promoter of the 'Verdun Theatricals.'

"The fourth club was R——'s, on the same plan with the last. It also had its balls and card parties. It was established to support a family of distinction in distress, and ceased in 1805, when this family were inhumanly sent away by the detested tyrant, General Wirion.

"The 'Upper Club,' which took its name from being situated in the Upper Town, was founded in 1805 by Mr. Stephen Wilson and Mr. Ives Hurry at a very large hotel: the apartments would have been thought handsome even in St. James's Street."

In addition to the clubs, as our *détenu* informant relates, "a numerous and well selected library was hired from a *cidevant* Abbé, for the use of the Society, which consisted of about 100 members, both *détenus* and prisoners of war. Tea, punch, negus, etc., were supplied, and the profits devoted to the support of the family of a respectable merchant whose detention occasioned his ruin. He had apartments assigned him, and was comptroller of the expenses.

"Each of the clubs was obliged to pay 25 livres per month to the poor at Verdun."

"The establishment of these clubs," the writer of the account remarks, "should not be regarded in the same light as if they had place in a town of equal size at home. It was a luxury in Verdun to have a general place of rendezvous, where an informer could not easily penetrate,

and where all the gazettes and pamphlets of the day were to be met with. Several individuals who were not flush in cash spent their mornings, noons, and nights, by the side of a rousing fire, by which means they saved the expense of fuel at home, and when disposed to retire, a candle-end lighted them to their cheerless home."

But there were other features in the social life of the prisoners at Verdun which were of a more dangerous and pernicious nature. "Happy would it have been," remarks our *détenu* friend, the Chevalier Lawrence, the son of a wealthy West Indian planter, and also a literary dilettante, trapped in Paris in 1803, "if many of our countrymen had never quitted the sober amusements of the club-room for the tempting delusions of the gaming-table, which were carried to a dreadful excess at this depôt.

"Soon after the arrival of the *détenus* at Verdun the game of Hazard having been introduced at the Caron Club, General Wirion sent a gendarme to suppress it; but this act proceeded from the most corrupt of motives: the General was resolved that the English should only lose their money at the bank in the winnings of which he had a share.

"A regular *Rouge et Noir* bank was soon afterwards established, which was open from one at noon till five, and from eight it continued all night! The sums of money lost by the English were considerable. Many lost a thousand pounds, others more. Not only men of fortune, but Lieutenants of the Navy, midshipmen, and masters of merchant vessels were led away by the temptation. Persons who had never before touched a card in their lives were, from want of occupation, from mere *ennui*, induced to risk half a crown, till the passion grew upon them, and then, to regain their losings, they plunged deeper and deeper into difficulties. Every night some drunken guests were decoyed by girls of pleasure, placed for that purpose; and to add to the infamy of those who were at the bottom

of this nefarious institution, the following inscription in French was written in large letters:

THIS BANK
IS KEPT
FOR THE ENGLISH
THE FRENCH ARE FORBIDDEN
TO PLAY AT IT

"Scenes took place in this house," we are told, "which would require the pencil of a Hogarth to depict. Here the unwary spendthrift found an elegant supper, heating wines, abandoned women—in short, every stimulant to vice."

The ugly scandal of the *détenus*' gambling hell at Verdun in due course reached Paris. It got to Napoleon's ears after his return from the Austerlitz campaign, with the result that a War Office order was sent down directing the gaming-house to be closed forthwith. The place had, however, sufficiently done its evil work for too many of the younger men.

To turn to another phase of life at Verdun among the British prisoners.

By way of out-door diversion, race-meetings were got up, a racecourse being "hired and fitted up near the village of Charni, with distance-posts, steward's box, etc." A pack of beagles also was procured—how, we are not informed—which was hunted regularly three times a week; a midshipman on horseback dragging a red herring by a string was the chase usually. To go out with the hounds became, we are told, "a very favourite amusement. A motly group followed, consisting entirely of prisoners of every description; sometimes as many as forty horsemen were seen in the field. It was an amusement eagerly

followed up, and seemed to break the monotony of a prisoner's life, being something to look forward to. The General, in allowing the exercise of hunting, granted a rayon of two leagues on each side of Verdun; but this was followed by the necessity each prisoner was under of signing his name in a book kept for the purpose in an office at Verdun twice in the course of the day—viz., once between eight and ten in the morning, and again between two and four in the afternoon. Those who wished to hunt took care, therefore, to sign as early as they could in the morning, and, provided they could ensure returning before four, they felt secure as to their last signature."

Theatricals, cock-fighting, and duck-hunting, and picnics in the summer among the woods within the two leagues' limit, and driving-out parties with the ladies of the families of the *détenus*, were other ways of passing the time adopted by many of the better off of the officer-prisoners.

There were, of course, at the same time many quiet men at Verdun among the prisoners, some of whom occupied their enforced leisure in pursuits of a different kind: in naturalist rambles, for example, or botanizing in the neighbouring fields. One naval officer — Lieutenant Tuckey of the *Calcutta*—who was captured in 1805, and had to stay at Verdun until 1814, gave up his time to writing a bulky three-volume work on maritime geography, which he published in England on the restoration of peace. A Captain Molyneux exercised his inventive faculties in constructing a carriage "propelled by sails, which could run at seven or eight miles an hour." Its evolutions, however, frightened horses on the high road, and one day it ran into a cart and upset it, after which the peasants took to stoning the inventor when they met him out on his runs. The experiments were finally stopped by the Governor's order. Captain Molyneux also invented an ice-boat with sails, and had some spins with it on the frozen Meuse in winter.

"Playing, dancing, drinking, and singing all day long," is one description of the general life led by the British prisoners given by an outsider who visited Verdun. Said another, who passed through Verdun in 1810, of the life among the prisoners: "Young Englishmen are much the same, whether prisoners or at home—playing, driving, and shooting each other." As to that last matter, unfortunately, as one result of the general idleness of the life led by many, and their reckless, wild ways, duels were of frequent occurrence; several British officers, indeed, lost their lives at Verdun at the hands of brother-officers. Duelling was permitted by the French authorities. "A prisoner of war may fight a duel," notified Napoleon in so many words to the Governor of Verdun, on the circumstances of one of the Verdun encounters where the surviving principal had been placed in confinement being brought under his notice.

One of the hardships most keenly felt and resented was the stoppage of all correspondence with friends in England. At first, subject to the usual conditions of liability to inspection *en route*, prisoners' letters had been allowed to pass to and fro whenever a cartel was exchanged between England and France. All that had to be done was the sending of them open to the Ministry of War in Paris. Napoleon, however, interposed, and ruthlessly stopped all private correspondence with England after the break-down of the peace negotiations in 1806. From that time onward he prohibited under severe penalties the sending of letters, directing that all which were intercepted should be destroyed, and the writers, if in France, punished. There only remained after that "under-ground" methods of transmission — getting letters smuggled over surreptitiously; but the system was untrustworthy, difficult, and very expensive. The cost, indeed, of "squaring" officials at Verdun, and buying the services of other intermediaries elsewhere, was prohibitive for all except the best off among the prisoners.

From the first, of course, English newspapers were not to be got, except by stealth, and only now and then. That was another great deprivation for the Verdun prisoners, who had consequently to rely for intelligence of what was going on in the world outside on what meagre odds and ends of news were permitted to appear in the columns of the official *Moniteur*, after being "doctored" under the drastic editorship of an official at the Ministry of Police.

Remittances sent privately from friends in England to prisoners, to supplement the pittance of pay doled out by the French Government, were also stopped after 1806. Even the transfer of bills of exchange was prohibited, and the French bankers were forbidden to discount the prisoners' drafts on London. The order had to be modified later, and certain of the restrictions taken off; but most of the prisoners were unable to get money, and had to run into debt with those of the local people who would trust them on the strength of promises of repayment when peace was restored. A considerable proportion of the junior officers had to be helped, as a fact, from time to time, both for their subsistence and their lodgings, by means of subscriptions got up on their behalf among the senior officers and wealthier *détenus*. In the end, there being no other way out of the difficulty, Napoleon had further to permit money collected by benevolent associations in England for the distressed English prisoners in France of all ranks and classes to be sent over, an official agent being appointed in Paris by whom funds were forwarded to Verdun and elsewhere.

At Verdun also, an English naval surgeon, a Dr. Davis, was tireless in generously assisting his poorer fellow-countrymen with gratuitous medical treatment, and clergymen of the Church of England among the *détenus*, two in particular, Messrs. Maude and Jorden, laboured incessantly in evangelistic work, holding mission services, specially for the young, in a disused building, the "Old

College" hall. They solemnized marriages also both among the families of the *détenus* and between some of the British officers and the daughters of certain French residents of Verdun. In regard to these marriages, unfortunately, legal difficulties were raised at a later date, after the restoration of peace between England and France.

Efforts were made also by some of the senior officers, headed by Captain Brenton, a man of deeply religious character, to protect from their evil surroundings many of the younger officers who were amenable to guidance and higher influences. Through Brenton's instrumentality a school was opened to carry on the instruction of the midshipmen prisoners at Verdun, as at sea, in navigation and theoretical seamanship, so that when their time for liberation came they might be ready to qualify for promotion. By that means it was further hoped, incidentally, to occupy their minds and keep the lads from getting into trouble through having too much idle time.

For the use of the British prisoners in general at the different depôts the Bible Society in London sent out in 1813 under a flag of truce several boxes of Bibles, but, as far as is known, the consignment only got as far as Morlaix in Brittany, where the boxes were landed and stopped by the Custom-house officials. In the Museum of the United Royal Service Institution, Whitehall, is preserved as a curiosity a copy of the Book of Common Prayer, of which Napoleon is stated to have had an edition specially printed for distribution in the British prisoner-depôts.

The Commandant of the fortress and the prisoner-depôt between 1804 and 1809 was General Wirion. There is nothing too bad that the Verdun prisoners can say about him. One British officer, writing in 1814 on his return to England after several years captivity at Verdun, speaks of "the multifarious instances of

THE BOOK OF
COMMON PRAYER,
AND ADMINISTRATION OF
THE SACRAMENTS,
AND OTHER
RITES AND CEREMONIES
OF
THE CHURCH,
ACCORDING TO THE USE OF
THE UNITED CHURCH
OF
ENGLAND AND IRELAND:
TOGETHER WITH
THE PSALTER OR PSALMS OF
DAVID,
POINTED AS THEY ARE TO BE SUNG OR SAID IN CHURCHES.

VERDUN,
Printed by LEWIS CHRISTOPHE, place d'Armes.
1810.

TITLE-PAGE OF THE PRAYER-BOOK PRINTED BY SAMUEL [illegible] FOR THE USE OF THE VERDUN PRISONERS OF WAR.

knavery and extortion, fraud, insolence, and despotism, practised by the ever execrable Wirion and his vulgar spouse." "During the reign of that contemptible tyrant," he goes on to say, "there was nothing odious in power abused by vulgar hands, nothing base in meanness or rapacity, but what was exercised with impunity against the feelings, property, and persons of the *détenus* and prisoners of war."

These are some of the things that the British at Verdun have recorded against General Wirion.

He would constantly, we are told for one thing, coolly turn up at, or arrange to be invited to, the private dinner parties and social entertainments given by the wealthier *détenus*, simply in order to make money at the card-play which went on at those gatherings after dinner, going home, it is more than hinted, with his pockets filled by barefaced cheating. There was, indeed, really no safe way of keeping the Governor out. It was always within his power, and Wirion had no scruple in exercising his authority, to commit any person who incurred his disfavour to the dreaded dungeons of Bitche or Sedan.

Speaking of the General's appearance at dinner parties and private card parties, this is what one of the Verdun prisoners records: "Even those amusements were not allowed to pass unalloyed by the vile despotism of General Wirion and his lady, who either obtruded their detested presence, or maliciously contrived, if uninvited, to render miserable those who attended or gave these feasts." The prisoners had to "allow him to win from them at cards in order to obtain small favours or to avoid being sent to Bitche, to which they were liable at his mere caprice."

From the public gaming-tables, according to one of the *détenus*, Mr. Charles Sturt, a Dorsetshire squire, Wirion regularly made from 600 to 1,000 francs a month; his commission on the profits of the establishment.

Complaints to Paris of what went on under the

Wirion régime proved unavailing, until, in 1809, General Clarke, Duc de Feltre, was appointed Minister of War, replacing Wirion's patron, Marshal Berthier. Berthier had been a personal friend of Wirion's, who, indeed, owed his appointment to Verdun to that Marshal, and every complaint from the British prisoners which managed to get to the Ministry of War—the majority of them were burked at Verdun—all the letters that got through by roundabout channels, on reaching Berthier's hands, were either pigeon-holed or burnt, no notice whatever being taken of them. General Clarke, having no reason to shield Wirion, and becoming aware that a rumour of Wirion's misconduct had reached the Tuileries, summoned the Governor of Verdun to Paris and had his conduct investigated by a Court of Inquiry. Wirion committed suicide, before the Court reported, in the Bois de Boulogne on April 7, 1810.

Records the *Police Bulletin*, a document confidentially compiled and presented daily for Napoleon's perusal, under the date "April 8": "General Wirion went yesterday morning at 10 o'clock in a hackney coach to the Bois de Boulogne. Alighting a few yards from the Porte Maillot, he blew out his brains. A letter to his wife was found upon him, and another to a doctor, asking him to attend to her in the sad circumstances. It appears that impatience at the apparent tardiness of the commission deputed to investigate the complaints against him was the reason of the General's suicide."*

During General Wirion's term of command, 1806, Napoleon's "Irish Legion" marched through Verdun on its way to join the Grand Army in Germany. To prevent an outbreak among the British prisoners, which the sight of traitors parading through their midst threatened to provoke, Wirion, with the fear of Napoleon's anger if there was trouble before his eyes, had

* I am indebted for this to Mr. Alger's book on the *détenus*: "Napoleon's British Visitors and Captives." See also (*post*) p. 231.

the time of the Irishmen's approach kept secret, and, arranging for them to arrive after dark, he billeted them in a village at some distance outside the fortress gates. The band of the Irish Brigade, however, gave the General away next morning. "At daybreak," relates one of the Irishmen, Myles Byrne, describing how the Legion continued its journey, "he had the drawbridge let down and the gates opened to let the Legion pass through before the English prisoners could see and have light to contemplate our green flag and its beatific inscription, so obnoxious to them, 'The Independence of Ireland.' Our march, however, through the town at that early hour attracted great notice. As our band played up our national air of 'Patrick's Day in the Morning,' we could see many windows open and gentlemen in their shirts inquiring across the street in good English what was meant by music at such an early hour."

Another French Governor, the Colonel in command of the prisoner-depôt at Arras, acted in much the same way for a similar reason when the Irish Legion passed through that fortress. "The Governor," Myles Byrne again relates, "had the good sense to make the English sleep one night in the citadel, until we marched through in the morning."

This incident is an instance of the barbarous treatment which the Verdun gendarmes under the Wirion régime were ready to inflict on the British prisoners, often on no provocation at all. It is recorded by a midshipman (Edward Boyes) as having happened to himself.

"Four of us were rambling about the country with a pointer and silken net, catching quails, when the gun was fired (as a signal of someone having escaped). On our return, in passing through the village of Tourville, we were surprised by two *gens-d'armes*, one of whom instantly dismounted and seized me. Uttering the most blasphemous epithets, he tied my elbows behind, and then, slipping a noose round my bare neck, triced me up to the

holsters of his saddle, remounted, and returned with his prize to the town, exulting in his cowardly triumph and pouring forth vollies of vulgar abuse; every now and then tightening the cord, so as to keep me trotting upon the very extremity of the toes to obtain relief; then again loosening it, as occasional guttural symptoms of strangulation seemed to indicate necessity. . . . My companions were secured round the middle, with the utmost violence and brutality; and thus we were conducted to town." No redress whatever was forthcoming.

Under Colonel Courcelles, Wirion's successor, who held the Governorship of Verdun for two years, things were really but little better. Courcelles, as one of the British officers remarks, "was a creature who trod in the vile steps of his predecessor." His mode of action differed—that was all. In place of Wirion's open scoundrelism he adopted underhand methods, victimizing in particular the poor junior officers, as being the easiest prey.

"During the reign of those two miscreants," says a naval officer among the prisoners, "it was in vain, or it was dangerous, in any individual to attempt to convey a statement of his wrongs, however grievous, to the ear of the Ministers. It was intercepted by the agents of the petty despots of Verdun, or passed over without attention; and not few were the instances wherein the complainants were made to feel the dark and cowardly revenge of which their base and contaminated minds were so eminently susceptible." In spite, however, of the precautions that Courcelles and his underlings took to keep their roguery quiet, information of their malpractices reached Paris in a form which required official action to be taken. Colonel Courcelles was summarily dismissed in consequence, and his principal assistant, the Lieutenant of Police, whom the mean and cowardly Governor threw over and put forward as being primarily responsible for what had been done, shot himself in the fortress ditch beyond the ramparts of Verdun.

The Courcelles scandal, following the Wirion scandal, proved in the outcome a blessing for the prisoners. They woke the Ministry of War up to a sense of its duty, and after that, as far as their Governors went, the Verdun prisoners enjoyed an ideal time. Two officers of exceptional character held the command in turn during the next three years; until the depôt itself ceased to exist. Under them the British prisoners had little to complain about in regard to their personal treatment.

This, indeed, is what the naval Lieutenant, whose condemnation of Wirion and Courcelles has been quoted, writing on his return to England in 1814, says of them: "The Baron de Beauchesne succeeded the infamous Courcelles; of the former it is difficult to speak too highly. It was an angel presiding where a fiend had ruled before. Full of generosity, honour, and dignity, this worthy nobleman in every respect was the reverse of his base predecessors. When he died, which was early in 1813, his death was deeply and generally deplored by the *détenus* and officers, who raised six thousand francs to rear a monument to his memory in token of their love and gratitude."

Warm as that eulogy is, our naval friend goes still farther in speaking of the Baron de Beauchesne's successor.

Of Major de Meulan, the last Governor of Verdun during the war, the writer cannot say too much. "I dare with confidence," he declares, "anticipate the general voice of my countrymen, who, when they shall read this unbought tribute of respect, will unanimously admit its justice. Accessible to the meanest individual; dignified, yet unassuming; he was distinguished more by the urbanity of his manners and integrity of his mind than by the glare of official pomp.

"When our officers broke their parole," continues the writer, "which from the fear of a gaol was sometimes the case, and were retaken, this generous man never failed to

mitigate, if not totally remit, their punishment; and not unfrequently procured their re-admission to the comforts of parole by becoming personally responsible for their future conduct. He kept within proper bounds the gendarmes, whose insolence and rapacity had been so severely felt under the infamous patronage of Wirion and Courcelles. . . . Towards many a friendless officer has he acted the part of an affectionate brother; towards many an unguarded youth, exposed in a peculiar manner at Verdun to the most dangerous seductions, has the brave and good de Meulan displayed the tenderness and solicitude of a parent, and snatched them from impending ruin and indelible disgrace. . . . It was impossible," the writer goes on, "to know such a man without loving him. How often have we regretted that the just war we waged should oblige us to call him an enemy. Should he ever visit this happy and envied island, I am sure there is not an officer or *détenu*, naval or military, who would not vie with each other in demonstrations of the warmest regard and sincerest attachment." That at any rate, after what has been said of Wirion and Courcelles, is pleasant enough to hear.

Throughout their captivity, till nearly the last, the prisoners, from all accounts, persistently buoyed themselves up with hopes that they would obtain their freedom at a not distant date; ever anticipating their exchange for French prisoners in England. It proved a futile hope, of course, but from time to time there seemed more than a possibility of its fulfilment.

A reference to the various efforts made by the British Government to bring Napoleon to reason in this matter, affecting as they did in a special degree the Verdun prisoners, may be added in this connection.

Two attempts to effect an exchange of prisoners were made by the British Government within a few months of the opening of hostilities. In 1804 a third attempt was made. "In order to lessen the evils of war and consult

the interests of humanity," ran the official note presented to the French Government, making reference to the two previous failures, "His Majesty had twice invited the French Government to accede to the principle of a general cartel on the bases of that which existed between the two nations in the last war."* In response there came from France a show of entertaining the proposals that England put forward, but neither side was genuinely in the mood to meet the other half-way. Napoleon insisted that the Hanoverian troops which had had to lay down their arms on the occupation of Hanover by the French in the previous year, and had been disbanded, must be classed as British prisoners in any exchange; which arrangement would have liberated a large additional number of the French prisoners in England. The British Government, on its side, demanded as a preliminary the unconditional sending back of the *détenus*, maintaining that they were in no sense prisoners of war. Indeed, said the Foreign Office, as a set-off against them, the British Government had already liberated, as "non-combatants," no fewer than 526 French subjects, civilian passengers in captured merchantmen and French traders in England. In addition, the immediate return of certain individual officers detained in France was claimed, their detention being, it was put forward, contrary to the laws of war. Three officers were specifically named—a naval Lieutenant named Dillon, arrested when entering Helvoetsluys with a flag of truce, and sent to Verdun; Captain Brenton of the *Minerve*, in exchange for whom a French naval Captain had been released some time previously; and Captain Wesley

* There was yet another attempt at bringing about an exchange in 1804. Nelson, while blockading Toulon on his own account, sent in a letter to Latouche Tréville, the Admiral commanding there, proposing an exchange of prisoners. It was forwarded to Napoleon, who made this reply, throwing the blame, as usual, on the other side: "Faites lui connaitre que tout échange est impossible: que le roi d'Angleterre n'a voulu en établir aucun, ayant persisté à y mettre des conditions inusitées et arbitraires."

Wright, also of the Navy, who was being kept in close confinement in the Temple in Paris under circumstances of peculiar cruelty. Meeting the British demands with an evasive reply, the French advanced a fresh demand of their own for the unconditional liberation of certain over-sea garrisons which had surrendered on terms not observed, as they said, by the British: at San Domingo, St. Lucia and Tobago in the West Indies, and at Pondicherry in India. With that spirit on both sides no agreement could be come to, and Napoleon thereupon closed the negotiations, roundly declaring that he would exchange no British prisoners at all.

Again, in 1806, in the year after Trafalgar, there seemed another chance for the British prisoners in France when the Fox Ministry attempted to arrange a settlement with Napoleon. This time a few of the *détenus* of social position, mostly political friends of the Ministry of the day in England, were released, and some half-dozen naval officers in exchange for French officers of equivalent rank. Napoleon's terms, however, were again too unreasonable, and the negotiations were abruptly broken off.

Once more, in 1810, the prisoners' hopes were raised, when yet another effort was made to bring about a general exchange. There were in France at the time, according to the official figures, 11,458 British prisoners of war, in addition to some 500 *détenus* of both sexes and all ages. Beyond these there were altogether in Napoleon's hands about 66,000 other prisoners belonging to Continental nations in active alliance with Great Britain—Spaniards and Portuguese—making with the British a grand total of some 78,000 prisoners to the credit of France. Across the Channel, in the English prisoner-depôts, were 64,770 French prisoners of war, including Italians and soldiers of the tributary German States, besides 2,294 Danes, 103 Dutchmen, and 302 Russians taken mostly at sea; making in all a total of 67,500 soldiers and sailors. Napoleon at the outset this time professed eagerness for an exchange;

but from quite early in the negotiations it proved impossible to pin him down to any straightforward arrangement.

He claimed first of all that the *détenus* of all kinds—old people, women and children—should be reckoned for exchange as equivalent to their numbers in French soldiers and sailors. The point was conceded by the British Government, desirous of doing anything that might lead to peace; and after considerable discussion the following tariff of equivalents was agreed to:

"The Earl of Beverley (the most prominent peer detained in France since the release of Lord Elgin and the Earl of Yarmouth during the negotiations of 1806) to be exchanged for a general officer of the highest rank of the prisoners now in England.

"Peers' sons and Privy Councillors to be exchanged against Colonels or naval Captains.

"Baronets and Knights to be exchanged against Field-officers and Commanders.

"Gentlemen holding no distinction of rank to be reckoned as equivalent to Captains in the army and Lieutenants of ships of war.

"Tradesmen (*petite bourgeoisie*), servants, etc., and all others detained, to count as equal to the rank of private soldiers and sailors."

"Recourse," it was added in a note, "shall be had to this principle of making up numbers by affixing a numerical value to rank only in the event of the failure of individuals who might be exchanged rank for rank against one another."

It was arranged that the balance against France should be made good by Napoleon sending back to Spain his Spanish prisoners until the total of the French prisoners in England had been reached.

Then came the first hitch. The British Government were wide awake to the character of the man they were dealing with, and required guarantees. In the discussion

as to these Napoleon coolly demanded that all his men should be sent over *en bloc* at the outset, in exchange for the English prisoners in France by themselves; that all the French soldiers and sailors in captivity should be released simultaneously with the twelve thousand English. After that had been done, he said, he would proceed to release the Spaniards he held. Napoleon plainly had it in mind, there was little doubt, to repeat the trick with which he had already victimized Austria and Russia, as has been told. But Napoleon was dealing with cool-headed opponents, and in different circumstances. Mindful of what had taken place in Europe, the British Government drew back and indignantly protested, threatening to break off the negotiations. "An exchange, of course," comments one of the London newspapers, "could not be assented to upon this principle; the effect of which would be to supply the enemy with sailors sufficient to man 25 sail of the line at least, and which would leave our allies, the Spaniards, still in the hands of Bonaparte; for there is no one acquainted with his character who would believe that he would release a man of them."

Napoleon then shifted his ground, with the result that again an agreement was come to on paper for a general exchange of prisoners in equal numbers. "All British, Spaniards, Portuguese, Sicilians, Hanoverians, and others, subjects of or in the service of Great Britain," ran its terms, "and all French, Italians, and other persons, subjects of or in the service of France, etc., Italy, all Dutch and Neapolitans, and all others, subjects of or in the service of the Powers allied to France, shall be released without exception." They were to be exchanged simultaneously, it was agreed, in batches of a thousand at a time on each side. After the British prisoners in France had all been sent over in that manner against an equal number of French prisoners, also all delivered, the Spaniards were to be returned by sea to Vigo and Cadiz, the Portuguese to Lisbon, and so on, all in batches of a

thousand at a time in exchange for batches of 1,000 French prisoners, until the depôts everywhere had been cleared out.

Again, though, at the last moment, there came a hitch, which this time resulted in the final breaking off of the negotiations. The trouble was over the exchange of certain officers. A considerable number of French officers of rank, as an act of courtesy and goodwill, while the negotiations were in progress had been allowed to go back to France from the prisoner-depôts in England, on the understanding that British officers of similar rank would be released immediately the French officers had reported their arrival in Paris. None, however, came. Not a single British officer in France was sent back. And then Napoleon, in response to a reminder from London, calmly announced that he did not propose to consider his returned officers as requiring any exchange. That flagrant act of bad faith exhausted the patience of the British Government, and the negotiations were broken off forthwith, after having dragged out for nearly three-quarters of a year—during eight weary months of hope deferred for the British captives at Verdun and elsewhere.

During 1812 a small number of the British prisoners at Verdun obtained their liberty in exchange for certain of the principal French officers captured by Sir Rowland Hill at Arroyo dos Molinos in Spain. Prince D'Aremburg, one of the Princes of the Confederation of the Rhine, and a member by marriage of the Imperial family, was among the French chiefs taken on the occasion, the "great card," as one of Wellington's officers styled him. To get back the Prince in particular, and certain other officers he wanted for special reasons, Napoleon, when setting out for Russia, consented to an exchange of prisoners on fair terms, but it was only on the very small scale mentioned—a few officers on either side.

AMONG THE SAILORS AND SOLDIERS AT GIVET

THIS is a glance at some things that took place among the sailors and soldiers in custody at Givet on the Meuse, a fortress in the extreme north of France, close to the Belgian frontier, which was the principal depôt for the British captives of the rank and file and lower deck.

"Givet," describes Midshipman O'Brien, of the *Hussar*, "is a fortified town in the Department of Ardennes and Bishoprick of Liège, divided by the Meuse. That portion on the south side of the river is called 'Little Givet.' This town is commanded by a very strong fort and citadel (Charlemont), built upon an immense rock: the fortifications were constructed by Vauban. A communication between 'Great' and 'Little' Givet is kept up by means of a pontoon bridge; the centre boats are placed so as to be hauled out occasionally to admit vessels to pass up and down, which frequently happens. The people appeared very much disposed to be friendly with us, but we were kept so very close and strict that it was impossible to form any acquaintance."

Some fifteen hundred prisoners was the normal establishment at Givet; surplus prisoners, on the arrival of fresh batches, being drafted mostly to Arras, Cambray, or Valenciennes. Refractory prisoners and those recaptured after escapes were sent, as usual at all the depôts, to Bitche, Sedan, or Sarrelouis.

Givet was set apart for its special purpose in the first year of the war, huge barracks being prepared there for

the reception of the prisoners, with spike-topped walls all round and iron-barred gates. The barracks were not quite ready when, at the end of December, 1803, the first set of British prisoners arrived, four hundred in number: the crew of Captain Jahleel Brenton's frigate, the *Minerve*, stranded off Cherbourg some five months before. They arrived without their officers, Captain Brenton and his Lieutenants and midshipmen having been held back among the officer-prisoners at Verdun, in accordance with a harsh and unnecessary regulation of the French War Office, which caused trouble and much suffering among the men. Captain Brenton, who received special permission a few weeks later to visit his men, taking with him money he had previously received through Paris from the British Government as a grant in aid, in order to try and improve the arrangements made for the prisoners (how he came to get the leave will be related in the Captain's general narrative of his experiences in France), gives this very interesting description of what he was able to accomplish at Givet. He tells the story in the official report that he drew up and was permitted to forward through the Ministry of War in Paris to the Transport Board in London, the department specially concerned with prisoners of war, alike the French prisoners in England and the British prisoners in France. The *Minerve's* men, on their reaching Givet, had been confined, until the prison-barracks were ready for their accommodation, in the underground dungeons of Charlemont, a noisome and unhealthy place. Their imprisonment in that manner was in fact the prime reason of Brenton's request to be allowed to go and see his men.

"Upon my arrival at Charlemont," says the Captain, "I found orders had been received there for the prisoners to be removed to the great barracks at Givet, upon the banks of the Meuse, in a healthy, good situation. They are divided into rooms containing twenty men each, with brick floors. The rooms are, however, comfortable,

spacious, well shaped, perfectly clean, with a good chimney in each. As no furniture of any kind is allowed them, I have hired ten bedsteads for each room. The bedstead, with a palliasse, is sufficient for two men. For the bedstead and palliasse I paid ten sols (sous) per month. The prisoners are allowed a blanket by the French Government, in addition to which I have furnished them with others. I consider this arrangement as better than purchasing bedding, which would create a great expense, and, in the event of the depôt being changed, be impossible to carry.

"The prisoners are allowed by the French Government three sols a day, one pound and a half of bread, a bundle of straw, and a small quantity of wood. The latter is by no means sufficient to dress their victuals, and a part of it has always been stopped to pay for hire of kettles to dress their meat, and earthen pans to put it into when cooked. In order to prevent the stoppage taking place in the quantity of fuel, I have also hired a kettle, jug, and two earthen pans for each room, which cost thirty sols a month."

With the sanction of the depôt-Commandant at Givet, a regular system of internal economy and discipline was introduced among the prisoners by Captain Brenton.

The French Government allowance, he arranged, should be paid in a lump sum to the mates, or senior seamen, in charge of the barrack-rooms, for them to lay out on vegetables and every-day necessaries as might be required; each mate acting for the men immediately under him.

"Well aware," proceeds Captain Brenton, "that by putting any sum into the hands of seamen, it might in many instances occasion intoxication and improper conduct, and that by supplying clothing only, without adding to their allowance of provisions, I should have defeated His Majesty's most gracious intentions of succouring his distressed subjects, as their clothes would have been sold to supply their wants, I have judged it necessary . . . to continue their daily allowance, viz., six sols each, to the

people belonging to His Majesty's vessels and packets, four sols to those belonging to the merchant service, and three sols to boys. I have contracted with a butcher at Givet to supply them with half a pound of good meat a day, at two sols per pound below the market price, which he brings to them every morning at nine o'clock and distributes to the several rooms." The mates, Captain Brenton directed, were to inspect the men's clothing every week, and in cases where any part of their kit was missing, and was not satisfactorily accounted for, the owners were to be put under stoppages of pay until the missing articles had been found or replaced at the cost of the man concerned.

A non-combatant officer of the *Minerve* was sent for from Verdun by Captain Brenton, and put in general charge of the prisoners at Givet. "In order to ensure obedience to these regulations, regularity in the payment, and good order in general," reported the Captain to the Transport Board, "I have placed Mr. W. T. Bradshaw, acting-clerk of the *Minerve*, a young man of excellent character, as superintendent, who will pay particular attention to the comfort and good order of the people."

He added this, on his return to Verdun, in regard to Captain Petervin, the then Commandant of the depôt at Givet, by means of whose friendly co-operation Brenton was able to make his arrangements: "I feel it a pleasing duty to say that the prisoners are treated with the utmost kindness and attention by the French officer charged with their superintendence, from whom I have received every possible assistance and indulgence in the performance of my duty; and it is with the most heartfelt satisfaction I can state that His Majesty's most gracious bounty has been attended with the happiest effects, and that I left my countrymen on the 16th inst. (January, 1804) cheerful, contented, and grateful in the highest degree."

Things seem to have gone satisfactorily for the prisoners at Givet as long as Captain Petervin remained Com-

mandant, throughout a great part of the year 1804. More prisoners kept coming in from time to time, the arrivals next following the men of the *Minerve* being the crews of the *Shannon*, wrecked off Cape La Hague in December, 1803, and of another British frigate, the *Hussar*, wrecked off Ushant in March, 1804.

Unfortunately for the prisoners, Captain Petervin was ordered elsewhere in the autumn of 1804, and thereupon a regular reign of terror set in at Givet. The second Commandant proved to be a harsh tyrant of the Wirion stamp and a dishonest official, with the result that the depôt became a regular hell for the unfortunates kept there. By the end of 1804 the British prisoners at Givet numbered upwards of twelve hundred. A number of midshipmen had at first been quartered at the depôt to assist in keeping the men in order, but these were removed to Verdun in July, 1804, and the sailors left without officers of any kind to support them or take their part, left to submit helplessly to the rapacity and ill-treatment of the new Governor. He and his satellites, the gendarme-warders, took full advantage of the opportunity. They treated the prisoners with shameless villainy, openly defrauding them of their money allowances, robbing them of their rations, and keeping them in a condition of absolute destitution, often in fact bordering on starvation.

The demoralization that set in among the prisoners at Givet during 1805 in consequence is described by one who was there as "frightful, almost incredible." It made things worse for them that Captain Brenton had some time before left Verdun to take up residence for his health's sake at Tours, and there seemed to be nobody in his place. To add to the guilt of those responsible for the depôt, the terrible condition of things was brought about of set purpose, with a vile and odious intention. The system of persecution was deliberately organized as an act of policy, with the design of reducing the

prisoners to so wretched a condition that, through sheer despair, they might be driven to accept the offers that were continually being thrust upon them of taking service in the French Navy.

This was the resulting state of affairs at Givet, as Captain Brenton, who after a time got to hear about it, told one of his relatives later. "Some few were drawn away by the offers made to them, and justified their desertion by the cold and hunger they had suffered. The rest, seeing no prospect of release, without employment and without resource, sought for momentary forgetfulness in intoxication when liquor could be procured, and then sunk into despondency and sullen discontent. A more fearful exhibition of human nature it is impossible to conceive!" "The prisoners," says someone else who saw them at Givet at this time, "were sunk in every kind of abomination, half starved by the French Commissariat, destitute of every comfort, and in a state of mind which aggravated all their external suffering."

Providentially, in their darkest hour at Givet, a friend was brought on the scene, who, by his single-handed efforts, was able in the end not only to recall the men to themselves and even bring into being a healthy, contented tone among them, but also, by dint of self-sacrifice, personal courage, and unflagging perseverance, so to work on the French authorities as to produce a complete reversal of existing conditions. He was a clergyman of the Church of England, the Reverend Robert Wolfe, a *détenu*, who had already during two years done good work among the midshipmen at Verdun.

Moved by the reports of the terrible condition of the Givet prisoners, which filtered through to Verdun, Mr. Wolfe got himself transferred to Givet, nominally as chaplain to that depôt. His generous and noble-hearted endeavours to do good among the Verdun midshipmen had already brought him more than once into conflict with General Wirion, and his removal to Givet

was in consequence not very difficult to arrange. "He determined," we are told by Captain Brenton, who heard afterwards of his action, "in a spirit of self-devotion, as rare as it is admirable, to move with his family to Givet, and to take up his residence amongst the prisoners, to try and forward the means of their improvement by personal exertions." Mr. Wolfe, indeed, undertook his task in spite of the remonstrances of his English friends at Verdun, who not only tried to impress on him the utter improbability of any good resulting from his self-sacrifice, but also tried to frighten him by strongly representing the very real personal risk that there must be to anyone, "above all others," as it was put, "to a parson," in venturing into the midst of men "who had practically become wild beasts," people "whom despair and suffering had rendered ferocious and whose whole relief seemed to be in making others more wretched than themselves."

After Mr. Wolfe's return to England in the winter of 1814, he wrote down an account of what he saw and did at Givet. His record forms indeed an uniquely interesting story. Some extracts from the narrative will best give an idea, perhaps, not only of what a brave and kindly man did, but also of some of the conditions our British sailors and soldiers had to bear up against.

"On my arrival at Givet," says the self-appointed missionary, "I soon discovered that I had undertaken a task of much more difficulty and danger than I had at all been willing to believe. I found the depôt in the most deplorable state. Both from a moral and physical point of view it would be impossible to conceive anything more degraded and miserable. . . . The bodily privations of the prisoners and their want of common necessaries of life were equally distressing.

"The barracks were situated in a narrow pass, between the perpendicular rock of the fortress of Charlemont on the one side and the River Meuse on the other; and

all the space the men had for exercise was between the building itself and the river, along the bank of which was a wall. This slip of ground, not more than ten paces in width, and exposed to the southern sun, was in the heat of summer a complete oven. Here they were obliged to walk, except they should stay in a hot room with sixteen persons crowded into it all day. It was almost impossible for any of them to get anything from their friends, for there was no one to receive it for them; and the little that did come was subjected to deduction of five per cent. by the *maréchal des logis*. Indeed, so great was their distress at that moment, that, unable to satisfy the cravings of hunger, they were seen to pick up the potato-peelings that were thrown out into the court, and devour them."

Of what resulted:—despair and the consequences.

"It appears to be the natural tendency of misery and want to foster vice and encourage the worst feelings of the human heart; that effect, in its fullest sense, was produced on this occasion. The little money that was received by the prisoners, instead of being applied to the relief of their wants and to make them more comfortable in food and clothing, was spent in riot and excess. On these occasions sailors are, of all other men, most ready to communicate (*sic*) and never think of to-morrow. Left as they were, entirely to themselves, no one having the desire or the power to restrain them, the depôt at Givet was, perhaps, the most reprobate spot that can be imagined."

"As regards religion," we are also told, "the only appearance of it was confined to some twenty Methodists, who were the objects of the most painful persecution, and often the innocent cause of the most dreadful blasphemies. For, not content with abusing and sometimes ill-treating them, they would blaspheme and utter their contempt in the most extravagant and offensive mockery."

As regards himself personally, as Mr. Wolfe soon found

out, he had much more to fear from the French authorities than from the prisoners, his hapless fellow-countrymen. "The Commandant and those who were under him, from the time I arrived at the depôt, viewed me with a very evil eye. They had all a share in the spoil of the poor prisoners, and my interference on their behalf, and the opportunities I had of detecting their extortions, enraged them exceedingly against me. For the first two years of my stay in that place I never went to bed without the impression in my mind that ere the morning I might be suddenly marched off."

Speaking of the regularized system of extortion practised by some of the French officers, Mr. Wolfe says this: "Before I left Verdun I had been cautioned not to pay any money to the prisoners, which might be remitted to me, without express permission from the Commandant—a caution which proved most salutary. For, even though I obtained this permission, the *maréchal des logis* came to me the next morning in a great rage, reproached me with taking away his 'honest gains,' and required me in future to send in the money through him. I complained to the Commandant, who inveighed against the avarice of this man; but I found that he was either unwilling or afraid to redress this shameful abuse. And, although I subsequently made many attempts to pay the men their money without this abominable drawback, it was always without effect, and at the risk of being denounced and sent away from the depôt."

Somebody was always spying on him, or trying to trap him. The officials with whom he had to do were continually tempting him to make unwary comments on official affairs for which he might be called to account. The whole place, indeed, seemed as though in a fog of treachery and suspicion. "In the impossibility of knowing who were in the interest of the Commandant, even among the men themselves, I had but one resource. I suspected nobody and I trusted nobody. At one time

the men, when they could not have what they wished, suspected that all was not right with me. At another, when they complained of tyranny and knavery, the agents and subalterns of the Commandant declared that I was at the bottom of it, and that they would soon have me in the dungeons of Bitche. At a third, the Commandant himself would be influenced by his people, and suspect me of underhand dealing."

Honesty, however, as usual proved the best policy. Fortunately, too, a third Commandant, a man of better type than his predecessor, had taken over the charge of the depôt soon after Mr. Wolfe's arrival.

"I found," says the chaplain, "that a plain and straightforward course enabled me to be more serviceable to the prisoners; and, though I could not help sometimes making strong representations to the Commandant, I never worked indirectly, or endeavoured to set the men's minds against him. My general resource was persuasion and a direct appeal to his conscience, and his *amour propre*, which was particularly his weak side. And, with the aid of a very kind and influential French officer of the Engineers, who was always ready to assist me and favour the prisoners, I was enabled to accomplish more by this open conduct than I could have done by action of a more indirect and inimical nature."

Mr. Wolfe, on arriving at the depôt, found Napoleon's atrocious system of bribing or seducing the prisoners, to get them to turn traitors and join the French service, in regularly organized activity. At that moment, Trafalgar having for the time being checked Napoleon's oversea ambitions, naval recruiting at Givet had been suspended. The men were now being pressed to take up service on shore instead, to swell the ranks of the various French foreign regiments—in particular the Irish Legion. About that Mr. Wolfe has a good deal to tell.

"I had found," he says, "that on one or two occasions an Irish officer in the French service (whose name I do

not mention in the hope that he may have repented of a course so disgraceful, and that it may have been overlooked by a generous country), had been in the prison, and by bribery and by giving them liquor had, each time, induced some of the men to go with him into the French service. To have interfered personally in this matter would have been a sure way of my being removed from the depôt. I, however, spoke to the Commandant on the subject of the youngsters, and, appealing to him as a father, requested that he would not allow any of them to take a step which would be their ruin, however much they might wish it in order to recover their liberty. And this he readily promised, and showed, indeed, a desire to do."

At a later interview the Commandant took the trouble to assure Mr. Wolfe that there was no ground for his anxiety. The men, he declared, "took the Irishman's liquor and laughed at him." The Commandant's assertion, however, was not quite in accordance with the facts that came to the chaplain's knowledge.

Mr. Wolfe discovered something in regard to that a little time afterwards, on going back to Givet after a visit to Verdun on private business.

"Returning to Givet, I was very much astonished to meet on the way two or three considerable parties of our men. They passed me with downcast looks, and shame was strongly painted on their countenances. I dared not speak to them, not doubting of the fact, and knowing that the consequences could only have been evil, without the least hope of good. When I arrived, I found that the men were so bent upon going into the French service that it seemed as though a sort of infatuation had taken possession of them, and although I was persuaded that the object of the greater part of them was to run away and get home, yet they were in the meantime becoming traitors to their country, and exposing themselves, if they were taken, to capital punishment."

What was he to do next? How was he to stop the men from deserting? He was aware that an English clergyman at another of the depôts had been sent back to Verdun in arrest for merely warning men in this very matter. Also, he heard that the Irish scoundrel was boasting openly of his success. "I thought," says Mr. Wolfe, "this was a case in which everything was to be risked." His mind made up, he acted boldly, promptly, and successfully.

"The officer, I found, had taken lodgings in the town, had got many men every day, and had declared that Christmas was coming on and that he should then have half the barracks. I went up, therefore, the next morning to church, as usual, and after the service I spoke to the people on the subject. I told them that I had not the least apprehension of any of them entering into the service of the enemy, but that they were called to use their influence with their fellow-prisoners, that it was their duty to employ every possible means to prevent others from doing a thing so wicked and disgraceful to them as Englishmen. They said that they (the French) had not only used persuasion, but force; and that the madness was so great that whilst a party of them were standing at the gate to prevent desertions, one at a time would take the opportunity, when anyone was coming in, and run past them before they could stop them. They all, however, set to work in earnest, and from this time there were not more than one a day, for the two or three days before Christmas, and I believe only two or three of the loose ones on Christmas Day; and immediately after this the officer went away."

As it so happened, Mr. Wolfe met the man: the Irish officer had the hardihood to call upon the chaplain for money. "One day I was sitting in my room writing, when a gentleman was shown in, dressed in the most elegant French uniform I had perhaps ever seen. Not having the least idea who it was, I bowed to him, and

spoke to him in French. To my great astonishment he answered in English that, 'understanding that there would probably come some money for some of the men who were gone into the French service, he would be much obliged if I would forward it.' I answered, I fear rather too angrily, 'that I should certainly send the money back.' 'Then,' said he, 'I have done my duty, and you will do yours.' 'I do not know, sir,' I answered, 'what your notions of duty may be, but certainly I shall not fail to do mine.' He bowed, with extreme confusion marked in his face, and hastily went away."

Generous tribute is paid by the chaplain to some of those who helped him actively against the Irish recruiter: certain midshipmen, who had been deprived of parole and exiled from Verdun to the rigorous discipline of Givet. "I ought," Mr. Wolfe remarks, "to make honourable mention of the midshipmen who were at the depôt. A number of them had been sent hither, some time previous to this circumstance, for attempting to escape, and they showed an extraordinary zeal to prevent the men from betraying their country. Mr. B——, then a youngster of about seventeen, full of zeal for the service in which he was engaged, copied and put up in the prison, in spite of the gendarmes and spies, a dialogue which I wrote out, showing them, in their own quaint expressions, what they might expect from the enemy into whose service they were enlisting; and the rest were very active and useful in preventing this defection. . . . Their conduct, as regarded their service and profession, was so distinguished and reflected so much credit upon them that it ought not to pass unnoticed."

Mr. Wolfe says this also of the midshipmen he had to do with at Givet: "On some occasions they gave us considerable anxiety, as might readily be expected by those who know what young persons of that age are, even under the restriction of a school. They were ready on every occasion to crowd every sail with the ebullition of animal

spirits that elevated national feeling, and exalted notions of the British Navy, could give them, without the ballast of matured judgment and experience, when they felt that their enemies exulted over them, or oppressed the poor fellows; and their interference on behalf of the men was often calculated to do harm instead of good. But I feel it incumbent on me to give this testimony to the distinguished conduct of these young persons in a point of view in which they raised the British character in that place; and that they did what they could to stir up in the minds of the men that sense of allegiance to their King and their country which time and absence had begun to extinguish."

There is, indeed, nothing that Mr. Wolfe can say too much for the midshipmen in captivity at Givet with whom he came in contact.

Speaking of the general tone and sense of honour among most of the young fellows, he mentions this incident of a letter which one of the midshipmen, Edward Boyes—the youth who has just been referred to—received from home; also its unexpected effect upon the French Commandant.

"They were so anxious to get home, and so ingenious and bold in facing every difficulty which stood in their way, that every expedient to prevent them was in vain. It was for this cause that some of them were sent from Verdun to Givet, and the Commandant took every precaution that he could think of to inform himself of their plans, so as to prevent their escape.

"Amongst other things, he opened all their letters before he allowed them to be sent into the prison, where they were closely confined. . . . After eight of them had escaped and been retaken, and at the moment when he was most alarmed and on the *qui vive*, a letter arrived for Mr. B—— from his mother. The Commandant had no doubt, from the natural affection of a mother, that it was to urge him to get home, and perhaps to point out a way and furnish him with the means, for

himself at least, if not for others also. But when it was read to him, he could not contain his astonishment and admiration, and spoke of it to everybody."

In the letter, which Mr. Wolfe speaks of as "showing a strength of mind and principle not common to the gentle nature and indulgent feelings of a mother," Mrs. Boyes, after telling her son that she had heard of some midshipmen at other places breaking their parole and getting home, entreated him on no account "to let any personal suffering, or ill-treatment, or example, induce him to do what would disgrace himself, distress his family beyond measure, and cast a reflection upon his country."

The letter, we are told, worked like magic at the depôt. As has been said, by a fortunate coincidence, just before that a new Commandant had arrived at Givet—an officer of a better type and kindlier disposition than his immediate predecessor.

"The letter," we are told, "together with a strict observance of a given, or even implied, parole, on the part of all the prisoners, even to the lowest amongst them, so raised the character of the English at Givet that the Commandant was quite persuaded that they were most in safety when they were in the enjoyment of liberty. Many of the men, therefore, were permitted to work in the town, and were much sought after by those who wanted workmen or servants; and a great number walked out into the town, and even into the country every day. But though they were constantly escaping from the prison itself, they never betrayed the confidence placed in them. The midshipmen were now all allowed their parole, and showed themselves as worthy of it as established officers."

The honourable conduct of the Givet midshipmen in regard to their parole, indeed, seems to have had a widespread effect among the people of those parts, according to another of the chaplain's stories. The

General in charge of the district, a General Monleau, was, we are told, openly complaining once, at an evening party, of the difficulty he found in preventing escapes of the midshipmen at another depôt where they were kept in close confinement. He had put them, declared the General, in his strongest dungeons, but it was all in vain. "Je vous indiquerai, Général," interposed a lady sitting by, "un moyen sur!" The General turned to her, listening intently. "Mettez les sur leur parole: les Anglais sont esclaves de leur parole d'honneur!"

We are told this story also of the midshipmen at Givet. It was a short time after there had been more escapes of the prisoners from the depôt; at night, from the prison after locking up hours.

"Three of the young gentlemen," says Mr. Wolfe, "gave proof of adherence to that pledge (the parole) which would reflect credit upon officers even of rank in the Army or Navy. Their friends had now been some time away, and had arrived home, and they began to regret that they had not gone with them. They came to me to ask me to give them money for bills upon their friends, which I did, of course asking no questions. The same evening they conducted themselves in such a manner as they were persuaded would cause the Commandant to take away their parole. But he suspected what they were meditating and refused to put them in prison. The next night they made a more determined attempt, but still in vain; he would not take away their parole. Precisely at that moment, as if to try their faith to the utmost, an order arrived from the Minister of War to send all the midshipmen, under a double escort of gendarmes, to Verdun. But in spite of this positive order the Commandant took upon himself to send them upon their parole: and they walked all the way to that place without the least idea of escaping, although all the soldiers of France would scarcely have prevented them from making the attempt."

There were no bounds to the persistent endeavours of this true-hearted man to better the conditions of life among those whom he had devoted himself to serve in their distress. These are some of the things he did.

As soon as possible after his arrival at Givet he set himself to establish a school of general instruction for the sailors, with the idea of giving the men useful occupation and combating the demoralizing influences that beset them. The school, which was open to men of all ages, proved successful beyond anticipation and worked wonders. "Though the funds were at that period of our captivity," remarks Mr. Wolfe, "but scantily, and with great difficulty, obtained, we were yet able to carry on a system of education which for extent, usefulness, and the rapid progress made by those who were instructed, has perhaps seldom been equalled. It is indeed wonderful at how small an expense a number of persons, generally amounting to between four and five hundred, were taught to read, write, go through the highest rules in arithmetic, navigation in all its branches, construct charts and maps, and work at the practical part of their profession, as far as could be learned from the form of a vessel which had been admirably rigged for this purpose. And the small sums given to those among them who were capable of instructing their fellow-prisoners as masters or assistants were very useful."

At the same time, Mr. Wolfe was toiling day after day to stir the hospital authorities at Givet into doing their duty to the sick prisoners. The most horrible abuses existed in the hospital at the time of his arrival. "This abode of sickness and misery was the most abandoned portion of the depôt." The wretched inmates were in a condition of utter neglect, "covered with vermin," we are told in so many words; left to the tender mercies of brutal and ignorant French soldier-nurses, certain old soldiers of the garrison told off for the purpose, who were allowed to do practically as they pleased—men, we are

told, "hackneyed" in every vice, and hardened amidst the most appalling scenes of sickness, misery, and death." The task of cleansing that Augean stable proved a lengthy and laborious one. It involved on the single-handed English clergyman strenuous personal toil by day and night, incessant visits to French officials, and appeals to their humanity, as well as repeated interviews with the Commandant, at first inclined to resent a foreigner's interference. But in the end it met with success. Patience and perseverance gained ground, and finally Mr. Wolfe got his way. The existing method became entirely reversed, and then the results were marvellous. "From this time," records Mr. Wolfe, "the poor men were as comfortable as in an English hospital. Extreme cleanliness," he continues, "succeeded to the state of filth in which I found them; and as wine and many other things were there abundant and very reasonable, they had even greater comforts than would have been provided for them at home. The consequence was that we had a smaller proportion of deaths, compared with the persons present, than is scarcely ever known."

Two or three among the more humanely disposed of the French officers of the garrison were induced to sympathize with the chaplain and assist him in his different undertakings for the prisoners, notably Colonel Flayelle, the Commanding Engineer at Givet. With this officer Mr. Wolfe was able to establish cordial and intimate relations. This is one of the stories that the chaplain tells about the Colonel's friendly disposition. Wanting to enlarge the prisoners' exercising ground, the chaplain asked Colonel Flayelle's permission to enclose an adjoining open space, offering at the same time to pay out of his own pocket for the palisading which would be required to keep the prisoners within bounds. "On this occasion, as on all others, he willingly listened to our wishes, and did more than we asked." Also, indeed, the Colonel made his own Government pay for the palisades. "I was agreeably surprised,"

remarks Mr. Wolfe, "when the work had been done and I went to settle my account with the Colonel, to find that he had represented to the Minister the inconsistency that there would be in allowing this expense to be borne by individuals, and he would not hear of my paying a farthing!"

As the final outcome of his labours at Givet, it is gratifying to record that Mr. Wolfe worked what might almost be termed a miracle. He even brought round the French authorities to side with him and be grateful. Speaking of one of the later Commandants of the depôt, who had begun by oppressing the prisoners and evincing hostility to the chaplain's measures, he says this: "The moral and religious feeling that was manifested among the men rendered them so much more peaceful and sober, more satisfied, and even cheerful in their conduct, and so much more faithful to their word and engagements, that I really think he felt it a sort of personal security to himself!"

Said, indeed, an English *détenu*, allowed to visit Givet in 1810, referring to the reformed conduct of the men: "This is a most extraordinary thing: I have been through a depôt of 1,500 sailors and not seen a single drunken man!"

When he first went to Givet, as Mr. Wolfe tells us, every prisoner at the depôt without exception was kept in close confinement, locked in behind the bolts of the barrack-square gates. "I began," he says, "by getting out one, and then a second and a third person, for my own service; then some others in whom I had most confidence. The good behaviour of these men encouraged the Commandant to give liberty to others. The number of those who had permission to reside in the town, or to work and walk out of the prison, increased daily; and at length, so complete was his confidence in them, that he allowed many of them to walk out into the country, and often let as many as two hundred out of prison at a time. . . . The Commandant was persuaded, and acted entirely

upon that persuasion, that the only thing that could bind them was the moral obligation of their word, which, whether given or implied, they never broke in any instance that came to my knowledge."

Escapes from within the prison enclosure, among the prisoners who were kept locked up, there certainly were from time to time, but not one from among the prisoners at large in the town or those who had leave to go outside. "The most striking instances of faithfulness to their word, and a sense of obligation to it," as Mr. Wolfe says, "were given by the prisoners, and it was not officers or people of education who thus distinguished themselves, but common sailors and youngsters who might have been expected to view the breach of the parole only as a joke. So that it was considered that it was a national feeling, and raised the English character in that country extremely."

This most exceptional compliment, indeed, was paid to Mr. Wolfe during 1810. There being a rumour that he was to be recalled to Verdun, the senior French officers at Givet sent a memorial to the Minister of War in Paris in regard to his special services. It was signed by the General in command of the district, the then Commandant of the depôt, and the Colonel of Engineers, and set forth that "such was the contentment, cheerfulness, sobriety, and manageableness of the prisoners during his residence at the depôt that his presence was of more avail than any number of gendarmes."

Captain Brenton's opinion of the national value of Mr. Wolfe's labours may also be added. "The moral influence which was exercised on the people at Givet prevented desertion, and probably preserved hundreds of valuable seamen for the service of their country. The schools which were established at the same time for the boys rescued them from the evils of ignorance and prepared them to resume their places in the Navy, instructed in the theory and practice of navigation. Had this not been done, all the prisoners, both old and young, would have

returned from their captivity unfit for employment, and burdens to the country which received them; and the nation owed to Mr. Wolfe a debt which might have justified any mark of public gratitude."

Mr. Wolfe himself tells us further that after the war situations in England were found for many of the men who had been prisoners at the depôt "which their instruction at Givet rendered them capable of, and to which their good conduct during the period of their confinement recommended them. I have been informed," he adds, "of many who are now occupying stations exceedingly superior to their original prospects in life, having been taught even to read during their captivity as prisoners of war in France."

For his services, our Government at home, after the close of the war and with all the facts before them, proposed to give Mr. Wolfe not a single penny—nothing! After a time, under pressure, and in grudging response to the angry protests of certain officers who felt outraged at the scandalous shabbiness of the British Government, a lump sum was granted as a gratuity, "representing a chaplain's pay during the period of his residence at Givet." No more than that. The sum was granted—on paper. With pitiful meanness the Treasury kept the money back for months. It was only paid over in the end, we are told, "after long delay and many applications."

The most memorable day in the annals of Givet, and for the British prisoners there as well, came in November, 1811, on the twelfth of the month, when Napoleon visited Givet. An incident of an extraordinary and dramatic nature further marked the occasion. It was when Napoleon, accompanied by the Imperial Head-Quarters Staff, was making an official tour of inspection through Holland and along the northern frontier of France. The Emperor was on his way back to Paris, and selected Givet as one of the places at which he would halt for a night.

The local authorities were, of course, all agog with excitement for days beforehand, and "loud in their expressions of a desire to show their devotion and zeal." So we are told by Mr. Wolfe, who saw it all, and had also, as things turned out, a part to take in connection with the unrehearsed event which made Napoleon's visit historic for the British prisoners of war.

Napoleon was expected early in the afternoon. He did not come; nor was it known where exactly the Imperial party were. It was only known that they were on their way to Givet. The weather was November at its worst: raw and misty, with continuous torrents of drenching rain, and the streets of the town ankle-deep in mud. All the authorities of the district, military and civil, in their most gorgeous uniforms, had been assembled waiting for the Emperor throughout the day, nervous and fidgety in their anxiety as they fretted over the unaccountable delay. From eleven in the morning until five in the afternoon they waited, penned up together in the *salon* of the Hôtel de Ville. Four o'clock came, and still there was no news of the approach of the Emperor. Then, just as it was growing dusk, all of a sudden one of the advance-couriers of the Imperial escort, splashed with mud from head to foot, came galloping into the courtyard in front of the Hôtel de Ville. Windows were thrown up, and every neck was craned out in excitement. "His Majesty is at hand!" called out the messenger.

Out into the rain forthwith all the assembled functionaries had to turn, and paddle off through the mud to meet the Emperor at the town boundary. "The procession had to wade through it all in full dress," describes Mr. Wolfe, "bearing their blushing honours thick upon them. The General of Division, the Prefect, the Mayor, and all the other authorities, in silk stockings and dress shoes, had to walk in all this pouring rain for nearly a mile, the Mayor repeating to himself a speech which he had prepared for the occasion of presenting the keys of the town.

Arrived at the boundary, they halted, waiting, with much patience in spite of the weather and the dirt, the coming of the Emperor. Couriers passed quickly, and at length the *cortége* arrived.

"It was nearly dark, yet it was light enough to distinguish the august company. The Mayor announced who they were, and what was their purpose. But not a word was deigned; the only answer was an additional crack from the whips of the postillions."

All that could be done then was to go back. They all, therefore, the General, the Commandant, the Prefect, the Mayor, and the score of other official personages, splashed their way back in solemn procession to the centre of the town until they came to the mansion that had been prepared for the reception of Napoleon. They entered the courtyard, and sent in word who they were. Nobody asked them inside the building, and they had to stand there, drenched to the skin in the incessant downpour, numbed and shivering with the cold, for nearly an hour. No notice whatever was taken of their presence, although they sent in word a second time that they were there, and craved an audience to pay their dutiful respects to His Majesty. At length somebody came to the hall door to see them. It was Caulaincourt, the Marshal of the Imperial Palace. "Messieurs," ran his curt message, "Sa Majesté L'Empereur ne reçoit pas!" His Majesty does not wish to receive anybody. That was all Caulaincourt said, and turned on his heel. The dripping dignitaries of Givet had to go away back to the Hôtel de Ville. There, before they dispersed, they were informed that Napoleon proposed to proceed on his way at seven o'clock next morning. His Majesty also did not desire to see anybody at all at Givet, except the Engineer officer in charge of the fortifications.

But before Napoleon was able to get away from Givet something else was to happen. The River Meuse had been flooded by the torrential rain and was rising rapidly.

It ran, as has been told, between Givet and Charlemont, the two groups of fortifications being connected by a pontoon bridge, over which lay Napoleon's road to Paris.

Disquieted at a rumour about the dangerously swollen state of the river, which reached him in the course of the evening, Caulaincourt, between ten and eleven o'clock, sent for the Captain of the pontoon-train, who was responsible for the bridge. "Is the bridge in any danger of being carried away?" asked Caulaincourt of the officer as he entered. "No, your Excellency," was the reply; "I believe it is perfectly secure." "Will you answer for it?" "I will." The Captain thereupon withdrew.

He had, however, been made uneasy by the Marshal's interrogation, and forthwith went down to the river bank to inspect the bridge once more. What he saw now alarmed him. The river was still rising, and he began to doubt whether the moorings of the pontoons could stand the further strain. He hastened back, thereupon, to the house where Caulaincourt was lodging to report his fears to the Marshal. But Caulaincourt had gone to bed. The Captain saw the Staff officer on duty, and asked him to take a message to the Marshal of the Palace. The supercilious young guardsman, however, fresh from the supper table, only laughed. He loftily referred the importunate Capitaine des Pontonniers to Caulaincourt's valet-de-chambre! That was too much. With a snort of indignation, and saying, "Je ne vois pas les valets," the officer turned away, and again hurried back to see what could be done to make the bridge safe.

He sent for more of his men, with a supply of chains and grapnels, and they all worked their hardest for three hours to keep the pontoons in position. But all their labour proved in vain. Between three and four in the morning a fresh flood of storm-water came swirling down stream. It snapped the heavy chains of the pontoon like pack-threads, sweeping the entire bridge away before it.

In despair the wretched officer went back again to the

Marshal's quarters, and this time he had Caulaincourt awakened. The interview, which took place in the Marshal's bedroom, was an angry one. Caulaincourt lost his temper, and in his rage struck the Captain. Again the unlucky officer hurried out through the rain to see if anything could be managed; but nothing whatever could be done. The Givet engineer troop, who had been working all night, were worn out and useless for further exertions. The rest of the garrison were asleep in their barracks, most of the soldiers dead drunk after revelling in the cabarets during the previous evening in celebration of the Emperor's visit.

The Colonel in charge of the fortifications had been sent for meanwhile by Caulaincourt. He came at once, but he could only suggest one remedy. "You will do nothing, Monseigneur le Maréchal," he said, "unless you send to the depôt-barracks and get some of the English prisoners!" Caulaincourt stared, staggered at the very idea. But Colonel Flayelle, who knew more about the English prisoners than any other Frenchman at Givet, insisted on his proposal as absolutely the only thing to be done. Caulaincourt had in the end to assent. "Will you answer for them?" asked the Marshal then. "With my head!" replied the Colonel confidently. So it was settled, and Colonel Flayelle hurried up at once to the depôt-barracks, where, in a very short time, thirty picked seamen were collected, told what was wanted of them, and marched down to the riverside to construct a temporary bridge.

Mr. Wolfe saw the men at work soon after daylight. "The windows of my lodging commanded a view of the bridge," he describes, "and on my first looking out in the morning I was extremely surprised at seeing a number of our men at work upon the river.

"They really had the appearance," he continues, "of amphibious animals in shape, and with an extraordinary share of the intelligence of men; some working up to

their necks in water, others skimming in little light boats against the rapid current as if they were going with the stream; at one time swimming to a place they could not otherwise reach, at another diving to a vast depth to carry out their work." . . . "I immediately," adds Mr. Wolfe, "sent out my servant with some brandy, and gave each of them a little to prevent them from taking cold. And, as I thought it very probable that they might obtain their liberty, I allowed him to go and help them; and many men, who had permission to live out in the town, did the same."

Dressing hastily and going into the street, Mr. Wolfe took his way to the house where Napoleon was staying, in case the great man might be visible to outsiders. "Finding it impossible to get near the door of the house for the crowd," says he, "we placed ourselves before the window. Here a great number of persons were collected to get a sight of Napoleon, who came from time to time to the window, looking with astonishment at the activity and exertion of the sailors, and sometimes turning his glass down upon the persons under the window, where some of the first noblemen in that neighbourhood were waiting, humbly seeking to catch a look from him that they might present to him their different petitions, but of whom he took no more notice than if they had been dogs."

"In the morning," continues Mr. Wolfe with regard to Napoleon, "when he found his departure prevented, he was absolutely furious; but he soon began to cool and returned to bed. After breakfast, he sent for all the authorities, and was affable and familiar in the extreme . . . and every one who approached him was in admiration and delight. The Mayor, who was a very nervous man, and from the Emperor's conduct on the previous evening was in the greatest trepidation, was set at ease as if by magic. When he entered, Napoleon was sitting on a table shaking his legs under it. He addressed him in

the most familiar manner—'Ah! bon jour, Monsieur le Maire'—and entered into an easy and cheerful conversation with him about his family and everything that concerned him. I never in my life," adds Mr. Wolfe, "saw a man capable in an instant of such a change of countenance. At one moment he would seem to look through a person with knit brows and a fierceness so terrible as scarcely to appear human. The next moment his countenance would light up and exhibit an appearance of sprightliness and good-humour which is rarely seen in man."

This almost incredible and certainly unique incident took place on the reconstructed bridge between nine and ten o'clock that morning.

"On leaving the Palais," relates Mr. Wolfe, "Napoleon went down to the river, and here a very interesting scene was offered to our view, and one that exhibited in a strong and gratifying point of view the character of the British sailor. The English were still working at the bridge, which they had nearly finished. He began to talk with one of them, through Mortier [the celebrated Marshal, Duc de Treviso], who was standing with him, and they all came round him. And now, any one of these men, who would have gone up to a cannon's mouth to have destroyed this enemy in battle, might, with one push, have sent him to the bottom of the Meuse, to rise no more. With good reason they might have said of him that he made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof, and opened not the house of his prisoners. Yet, far from having any evil thoughts towards him, when he confided in their good faith, they were a sort of *garde d'honneur* to him as he passed the river. And so great was the confidence that he had in them that he would have no one else about him; and there was not a single Frenchman allowed to be on the flying bridge which they had constructed to bring him over."

On the further bank Napoleon mounted his horse and galloped up the almost breakneck steep leading to the fortress of Charlemont, careering without drawing rein right round the fortifications, and all the time making observations to the Colonel of Engineers and his staff, who could hardly keep up with him. "He returned before those who had been about him were well aware that he had set off."

Before leaving Givet Napoleon had it notified to Mr. Wolfe, through the Mayor, that all who had been engaged on the bridge should, as a special favour, be permitted to return to England immediately; with a new suit of clothes per man and a gratuity. Also Mr. Wolfe was to be permitted to accompany them, in charge of the party. Faith, however, was not kept with all the thirty British prisoners who had worked on the bridge. The list of names which was made out, on being forwarded to the Minister of War in Paris, was cut down to less than half, and only fourteen of the thirty actually gained their freedom.

It may be added that Napoleon himself did not forget the incident of how the English sailors reconstructed Givet bridge. This is the version of the episode which he gave at St. Helena to Dr. O'Meara, his Irish medical attendant during those last years. In his own account Napoleon took all the credit to himself for the idea of making use of the English prisoners. According to O'Meara Napoleon told the story in these words:

"When I was returning from Holland, along with the Empress Marie Louise, we stopped to rest at Givet. During the night a violent storm of wind and rain came on, which swelled the Meuse so much that the bridge of boats over it was carried away. I was very anxious to depart, and ordered all the boatmen in the place to be assembled that I might be enabled to cross. They said the waters were too high, that it would be impossible to pass before two or three days. I questioned some

of them, and soon discovered that they were freshwater seamen. I then recollected that there were some English prisoners in the place, and ordered that some of the oldest and best seamen among them should be brought before me to the banks of the river. The water was very high and the current rapid and dangerous. I asked them if they could join a number of boats so that I might pass over. They answered that it was possible, but hazardous. I desired them to set about it instantly. In the course of a few hours they succeeded in effecting what the other imbeciles had pronounced impossible, and I crossed before the evening was over. I ordered those who had worked at it to receive a sum of money each, a suit of clothes, and their liberty."

Such was Napoleon's own version of the story of the bridge of Givet.

IN THE DUNGEONS OF BITCHE AND SEDAN

BITCHE, an isolated fortress in Lorraine, some eighty miles east of Verdun, was the principal punishment-depôt for British prisoners who transgressed the regulations, naval and military officers and men, and civilian *détenus*. "The high turrets and massive towers of the gloomy fortress," as Midshipman O'Brien describes with a shudder the aspect of the place, "stood perched on the summit of a vast rocky eminence, steep and almost inaccessible, with a sheer drop of some hundred feet on all sides, amidst a bleak, forbidding tract of country. Their very appearance was sufficient to strike the mind with horror. . . . It had on one side three ramparts. The first is from 90 to 100 feet high; the second from 40 to 50; and the third from 25 to 30; with redoubts, entrenchments, and all contrivances of military engineering almost innumerable."

Verdun furnished most of the Bitche victims, principally during the rule of General Wirion, sent often for no specified offence. Some of Wirion's officer victims, indeed, were not allowed to know anything of what was impending for them until they were suddenly roused out of bed by gendarmes in their lodgings in the town—usually between four and five in the morning, while the whole place was asleep. The gendarmes hustled their victims off, giving them hardly time to cram into a trunk what things they could lay hands on at the moment; sometimes, indeed, we are told, hardly allowing them time to get all their clothes on. The prisoners were then ordinarily started off on foot, sleeping at night while on the way in the

gaols of the places passed through. "As an indulgence, which I paid for," records one officer with money, who was so sent from Verdun to Bitche, "I was permitted to travel in a vehicle, with, as my companions inside, the two gendarmes my guards. I had to pay for the gendarmes' food and drink by the way—and they ordered what they liked!"

Such was the experience, as a fact, of the first British prisoner sent to Bitche—a Colonel Stack of the Old Irish Brigade of the French Royal Army, who, after the Revolution, had joined the British Army. He had been arrested in Paris as one of the *détenus* and sent to Verdun. On the night before his deportation to Bitche Colonel Stack gave a large dinner-party in the house at Verdun he was allowed to occupy, at which General Wirion was present, all amiability and smiles. Wirion left the house at midnight, shaking hands with his host and thanking him heartily for his hospitality. Three hours after that, at three in the morning, two gendarmes knocked Colonel Stack up, produced what purported to be an order from Paris for his immediate transfer to Bitche, and hurried him off in a carriage hired at the Colonel's expense. They behaved during the journey as has been said, eating their meals at the Colonel's table, and even sleeping in the same bedroom with him. Colonel Stack was kept a close prisoner at Bitche for over three years, no reason for his detention being forthcoming. He was then sent back to Verdun, where he had to remain until 1814—until the end of the war.

Prisoners of every description and class were to be found at Bitche: naval and military officers whose parole had been taken away, sailors and soldiers, also a number of *détenus*, some of them gentlemen of position in England, others blackguards and rogues, sharpers, drunkards, and so forth, whom the Verdun authorities had found it convenient thus to get rid of. The senior officers and *détenus* were assigned quarters in the upper barracks and case-

mates in the citadel, as many sometimes as twenty having to live together in the larger apartments. They were badly fed, on Government rations, and had to do everything for themselves, being subject to rigorous confinement, and only allowed out for exercise in the barrack-yard for a limited time every day; but they fared royally in comparison with the lot of the other prisoners—the great majority—of inferior station. These, comprising midshipmen and merchant-ship officers and sailors and soldiers, were all crowded into underground vaults, damp, cold, loathsome dungeons, originally hewn out of the solid rock in the days of Louis XI. of France to serve as the storehouses of the fortress during a siege.

One of the smaller vaults, the worst of all, a cramped and narrow cell in which were confined prisoners recaptured after escape, and undergoing special punishment in consequence, was fifty steps beneath the surface of the rock. "It was fifty deep stone steps underground, for I have often counted them," records Midshipman O'Brien, who was on two occasions kept a prisoner at Bitche. The place he describes as being "ankle-deep in slime and filth," and "reeking with noxious and pestiferous effluvium." For window there was one narrow hole in the rock face, with a triple-barred iron grating across it; that single aperture to admit air and light, and the prisoners there were only allowed, all the year round, "a little straw and a blanket." Half a dozen men were sometimes kept there together, for a month at a time, with only two hours above ground daily for exercise.

In another dungeon, one of the principal *souterrains*, thirty steps under ground, according to O'Brien's description, as many as sixty prisoners were confined together, and had to live, and eat, and sleep in the place. They were allowed a wood fire in winter, "as an indulgence," and rush-lights at night, with, for bedding, a blanket and straw on the floor. There were two large *souterrains* of this kind at Bitche.

In these vaults sailors, soldiers, and midshipmen were penned in together in squalid misery, "among the rats which infested the dungeons." They were allowed between certain hours every day to walk up and down in the confined space of the central courtyard of the fortress, under observation all the time by armed sentries posted on the walls round. All were locked up for the night at seven in the evening in summer, and at four o'clock in winter.

A call-over of the prisoners was held at eleven o'clock every forenoon; nominally a roll-call, it was usually a mere formality, the counting of heads by the gendarme in charge of each dungeon. Once a month a general muster and parade was held in the main courtyard, when all were officially inspected by the Commandant. No excuse for non-attendance at that was accepted, we are told, "not even sickness." "If a prisoner was able to crawl, he must attend, and frequently they were carried," relates O'Brien.

In spite of everything, in spite of the most elaborate precautions by the officers in charge, the most incredible difficulties of the place and situation—the towering ramparts, the double drawbridges over deep ditches, the triple-walled fortifications which barred access to the world outside—there were several attempts at escape from Bitche. In most instances, unfortunately, the attempts were unsuccessful; but some reckless fellows did actually manage to get away, as will be told farther on in this book.

General Lord Blayney, who was at Verdun as a prisoner of war, records this experience of incarceration at Bitche, "which," he says, "I received from a gentleman who had inhabited its subterraneous dungeons."

"We arrived at Bitche," describes the narrator, "and were marched to the Petty Tett, where we were searched for concealed implements with which we might attempt our escape. From thence we were conducted to the sub-

terraneous dungeons, and, to our great surprise, were better received than we expected.

"The first night we were put into the great dungeon in which were three or four hundred midshipmen, soldiers, sailors, and others jumbled together. The descent to it was about fifty or sixty steps, and on reaching the bottom we were received with three cheers, immediately hoisted on the shoulders of four men, and marched round the place with hallooing and shouting. A blanket was then produced, into which we were forced to enter, and received a hearty tossing. These ceremonies we thought would make us free of these gloomy abodes, but, in addition, we were obliged to give two bottles of 'snick,' an ardent spirit which, when mixed with water, turns quite blue! It is not, however, considered more unwholesome than other spirits.

"In two or three days we were shifted from the grand to the little dungeon, called by the seamen 'Saint Giles's.' The descent was by nearly the same number of steps as to the great one, and we were made free by going through the same ceremonies as before, with a double allowance of 'snick,' which being drank, and some of the party being half-sea over, I was asked 'if I could show?' To that, not knowing the meaning, I answered 'Yes.' A ring was immediately formed, I was stripped to the buff, and a champion of nearly my height, but much stouter, stood forward, and in self-defence I was obliged to commence a boxing-match, which was regulated by all the rules of pugilism, each having his bottle-holder and second. At the end of every third round we each got a glass of 'snick,' and in this manner I was forced to fight for an hour and a half; but being inferior to my antagonist, I received a drubbing that prevented my moving for six days.

"The dungeon, which resembled a large wine-vault, is sunk twenty-five to thirty feet underground, and is excavated in a saltpetre rock. In many places the walls drip continuously from the vaults, and in winter the cold

and damp are beyond description; nor had the prisoners in general clothing sufficient to prevent the baneful effects on their health, the blanket allowed to each being usually a condemned one from the soldiers' barracks.

"In these shocking dungeons the prisoners were locked up from eight o'clock at night till the same hour in the morning, when they were mustered out and permitted to remain in the yard, which is about one hundred and twenty paces in length and twenty in breadth, until noon. They were then again mustered into the subterraneous receptacle, and remained there till two, when they were again let out into the yard until six in the evening."

According to an English visitor to Bitche a few years ago—the fortress, it may be mentioned, is now in German possession, being within the Alsatian territory ceded at the close of the Franco-German War of 1870—the names, with ships and regiments, of many of the British prisoners are still to be seen, deeply cut or scored on the outer stone walls of the barracks, "more than one name belonging to well-known English, Scottish, or Irish families."

Sedan was the second of the prison-depôts in the time of Napoleon for British prisoners; it was used mostly for those sent for penal detention from Arras and Valenciennes, although a good number also came from Verdun and from Givet. If, to us of these days, Sedan is best known as the scene of the overwhelming disaster to the army of Napoleon III., in 1870, the name, in 1814 and for many a year after that, recalled for nine Englishmen out of ten memories hardly less hateful than those of Bitche. The fortress was visited during 1814, on the conclusion of peace, by Lord Blayney, while returning to England after his captivity, the General taking his way home through Belgium to embark at Ostend.

"In going through Sedan," says Lord Blayney, "I had the curiosity to inspect the fortress, so celebrated for being the place of punishment of those English prisoners who attempted to make their escape from other depôts.

Nothing could be more formidable than the place of confinement for these poor fellows in the citadel, or château, which is situated nearly in the centre of the town. To arrive at this abode of systematic torture you have to pass two very extensive covered ways, the latter of which is very steep and cut through a solid rock. On entering, you perceive a cell allotted to each person, no communication being ever permitted one with another. The doors of the prison are double, and secured with bars in all directions. Should anyone escape out of his cell, the wall to descend in the lower part is about one hundred and sixty feet deep, and having once attained that point, he has to climb over prodigious rocks and walls of immense height, surrounded by sentinels at short and convenient intervals.

"For a stranger to look at these precautions he would suppose it next to an impossibility to escape, but such is the powerful incentive of liberty that I have seen and known many common soldiers and sailors who have escaped from these prisons, without even the assistance of money to clear a passage; but almost all of them, after having surmounted these difficulties and obtained the summit of their wishes, unfortunately committed themselves by some act of intemperance or folly."

One of these men Lord Blayney mentions as having been visited by him at Verdun. He was a soldier of the 61st, an Irishman from Ulster, who was then confined in the Porte Chaussèe prison of Verdun, after having made his escape from Sedan three times within fifteen months.

Yet another punishment-depôt for the British prisoners of war in France was at Sarrelouis in Alsace. What life at Sarrelouis was like, and how some, who had experiences of both places, considered its horrors even worse than the horrors of Bitche, is related by Lieutenant James, whose amazing experiences, adventures, escapes, and recaptures, during the ten years that he spent as a prisoner of Napoleon, are related separately in the next chapter.

TEN YEARS A CAPTIVE: WHAT A NAVAL OFFICER WENT THROUGH

The Imprisonment and Attempted Escapes of Lieutenant R. B. James

LIEUTENANT R. B. JAMES, the author of the following narrative, as a midshipman was held a prisoner under Napoleon between the years 1804 and 1814. He recorded his experiences and adventures after his release at the Peace of 1814 in a manuscript volume, to which he added later an account of his further services in the Mediterranean, intending to publish the whole under the style of "The Naval Officer—or the Vicissitudes of a Sea Life, by Lieut. R. B. James, late First of H.M.S. *Revenge*." Apparently, however, he died before carrying out his intention, in 1830. The manuscript, which is very clearly written and is bound in volume form, fell in some way into the hands of a country bricklayer, from whom last spring it came into the possession of the present writer. In presenting here the account of Lieutenant James's experiences, the old officer's spelling and punctuation, uncouth as they may sometimes look, have been kept to. The narrative is given exactly as originally set forth, nothing being omitted or altered.

"It was in the month of August 1804; that the Rambler brig of war—to which I then belonged as midshipman, was on her return to the channel fleet off Brest;—having been with dispatches to Sir Robert Calders Squadron off Rochfort;— —Being close in with the land, near the Isle of Dieu; we discovered a convoy of small vessels going from

the Island to the main, escorted by a gun boat ;—A Shoal lay between us ; consequently we manned our three boats, and went in chace ; hoping to cut some of them off before they got under the Batteries ;— —it was light winds ; and our boats were coming up with them rapidly :—the signals were flying along shore for an enemy :—we could see them manning the Batteries ; and bringing field pieces down on the beach to protect the convoy :— —to our great mortification, the whole of them got into the harbour of St. Gilles, and the gun boat ran up a creek, and stuck on the mud :— —we followed them into the harbour, and brought out two Sloops laden with sour wine :—not a shot touched us, although within range of musquetry :— They fired a gread deal, but very bad :—Cutting out vessels from their Harbours, was carried on in such a daring manner, that, something very extraordinary must be performed, before it would be thought worthy of a letter to the Admiralty :—Boats were continually landing on the coast ; destroying Ships,—Batteries and telegraph stations :—

" However small and contemptible a prize may be :—the moment she appears alongside the Captor :—It affords a degree of pleasure ; and gives a zest, to pass away a night watch :—when these two miserable craft came alongside the Rambler, every body was on deck calculating their share of prize money ; which promised at least, Seven-pence-farthing a man :—If they had been burnt, as was proposed ; I should have had the blessed satisfaction, of escaping a ten years Captivity :—

" Fate however would have it ;—that I should proceed in one of them as prize master to England ;—and act as Commodore over the other, which was navigated by a Quarter Master ;—Five men and a boy were put on board of each, with three weeks provisions, and water, for the voyage.

" The boat was to have returned, with some implements of Navigation ; but a squall came on, and continued to

blow so hard; that, we lost sight of the Brig as well as the other sloop;—Here we were quite adrift in the Bay of Biscay;—in a craft with rotten sails,—without Log-line,—glass,—or a Quadrant,— —and a precious dull sailer to the bargain.

"The next morning Just after sun-rise, the sky appeared all round the horizon of a deep red; a sure sign of a Gale of wind;—we had made about fifty miles during the night, and expected to see Belisle, but the weather was so thick, that, it was impossible to see more than four or five miles distant;—This morning is too deeply engraved on my memory ever to be forgotten:—It fell calm during the first part of the morning watch; with a heavy swell from the WNW—

"About eight o'clock, we heard the distant thunder rolling in long peals;— —the sea emitted a strong rank smell;— —the sea birds were flying in all directions towards the shore, to avoid the approaching gale;— — mother Carey's chicken alone remained, and seemed to enjoy the weather, and kept in the wake of our miserable craft;—we first battened down all the hatches, and sent all moveables below, to prevent their being washed overboard;—

"About ten o'clock, the gale broke on us—in all its fury;—the sea rose like mountains;—and the balanced reefed—mainsail, was all we could show to the gale.—we knew to our sorrow; that we were not far from the French coast; and moreover; not above fifteen miles from a dangerous shoal, that lies off the mouth of the River Loire; and, that we were driving bodily down on it;—the weather gave us no uneasiness:—it was sea room we wanted:—The sloop, had a kind of Jerking motion, that made us all sea sick:—About one o'clock; a tremendous sea broke over us, and put out all our fire, and left us without any hopes of rekindling it again; so long as the gale lasted:——Our dinner was raw salt pork and biscuit;—we reefed our Jib and foresail—and endeavoured to set them, that

we might carry off shore :—but the moment we attempted to hoist them, they were split to atoms ;—nor were there any spare ones on board ;— —I had sent the men down below to their suppers ;—where, during the short time of a Quarter of an hour, they had broken open the liquor case, and each man had taken a Case bottle, that held about two quarts,—and drank almost to suffocation :— They prevented the boy from going on deck, for fear that he would inform me of it ;—They said it was better to die happy than be smothered in salt water ;—when I went below, they all appeared black, from the quantity of spirits they had taken ;—I untied their neckcloths and left them to their fate :—

" During two hours, myself and the boy were endeavouring to procure a light for the binnacle ; but all in vain ;— —About twelve o'clock, as I guessed by feeling the hands of my watch, we saw the dreadful breakers on the shoal to leeward :—The storm seemed rather to increase than otherwise :—The lightning like streams of fire :—and the thunder was so loud, that at each crack ; the sloop trembled as if she had the ague.— —The breakers that we saw, formed the edge of the sand bank ; and extended from our lee bow, to our lee quarter, and not above a mile and a half distant—It shone like silver ; and the light reflecting from it : formed a grand, but awful contrast with the red forked Lightning—I went below to see if I could rouse up the drunkards :—that they might assist in doing something towards saving our lives ;—but they were still quite senseless ;— —I then assisted the boy in closing up every part of the vessel :— —we were now near enough to hear the noise of those tremendous breakers ; whose roar, nearly drowned that of the thunder :—I then lashed the boy to the taffrail, and myself to the helm,—offered up a silent ; but fervent prayer to the great ruler of all our destinies ; begging his assistance in this trying occasion ;— —I managed to get the vessel before the wind, and steered her towards the place that seemed to have the least surf :—

I did this from the Idea ;—that,—if she had driven bodily down on the Bank; one of those heavy seas would have rolled her right over,—and drowned us at once.—

" On our approaching the breakers; my mind was calm and resigned ;—Death seemed to keep right in our wake :— The first sea that struck us; came towering with roaring foam, right over the stern;—its weight pressed the poor little bark down into the sea; and although loaded with water, sent her flying along at a furious rate :—

" Here I lost all recollection for the moment ;—but when I recovered my senses ;—I found myself on the deck under the tiller;—my stomach full of salt water, and sorely bruised about the head and arms :— —I looked round for the poor boy, who I saw still fast to the taffrail, but, to all appearance lifeless;—I soon unloosed myself, and went to his assistance :—He in a short time recovered sufficiently to walk about :— —we were in smooth water and three fathoms :—we tried to get up a range of cable, and come to an anchor; but we had not strength enough to do it ;—we soon drifted upon some rocks, where we lay rolling on them until daylight :—when we saw the land about two miles distant :—we hoisted french colours, and in an hour after two boats came off and took us out of the vessel, and landed us at a small fishing Town, called Pouliguin, on the left side of the entrance of the River Loire ;— —prior to the boats coming off our drunkards were on the move, and came on deck :—when I reproached them with their infamous conduct ;— —seeing that they would soon be prisoners,—they became insolent beyond bearing :— —They snapped their fingers at me, saying, that ashore in France Jack was as good as his master.—

" The moment we landed, the whole place was in an uproar; one would have thought that they had taken a Seventy four ;—every thing was stolen from us excepting the clothes we had on, and my watch :—we had the satisfaction of seeing them shared out, among a set of ragged rascals :—Thus departed my poor five years gather-

ing:—We were led in triumph through this little dirty Town to the Jail:—and put in altogether on some dirty straw swarming with vermin:—

"We remained here three days, to determine in which way we were to be sent to Nantz:—at last, it was decided, that we should go by water in a Chasse Marie, under the escort of some veteran soldiers.—

"I forgot to mention that the day I landed I was so weak from the fatigues I had undergone,—(and not yet arrived at manhood being—scarcely sixteen years of age) that I soon fell asleep on the straw;—and in spite of the myriads of fleas and lice;—I went over in my dreams the horrors of the preceding night, and suffered mentally, the same as I had before in reality.—

"The morning of our departure I sold my watch for ten crowns;—worth as many pounds;—'necessity has no law— —we were only allowed a pound and a half of coarse bread per diem;— —with part of this money, I purchased from a soldier, four of my own shirts, and a pair of trowsars:—Just as we were about to depart, to our astonishment and Joy, we were Joined by the crew of the other sloop;—they had been wrecked on another part of the coast, the same night of ourselves:—we congratulated each other in being in the land of the living:—and were now twelve in number:—

"Twelve veteran soldiers were appointed to escort us to Nantz, commanded by a serjeant.—we went on board a fine Chasse Marie, and set off with a leading wind and a flood tide, expecting to arrive at Nantz in the evening.—It was about twelve o'clock, that the soldiers were seated at dinner round their soupe aux haricots,—and only one sentry sat before us as a guard:—we were all in the hold on account of its being a drizzling rainy day;—and they put their musquets and bayonets in one corner of the hold out of the wet;— — —while they were at dinner;— — — we seized the opportunity, and in a moment each of us had a musquet and bayonet and the soldiers our

prisoners;—but our victory was nearly wrested from us, by the crew upon deck putting on the hatch, and running the Vessel towards the shore:—we soon burst it open, and fairly took possession without any blood shed;— —The tide had turned, and we were making rapid strides towards the open sea;—in a little more than two hours, we were near the place from whence we started;— —unfortunately, we saw a boat go off to a Brig Privateer, that was Just come in from sea:— —we had the mortification to see this fellow, slip his cable and make sail in chace of us;—It was impossible to escape from her, as she sailed like the wind—when he came alongside they began peppering us with musquetry:—we were soon taken possession of, and sent on board the Brig; where we were put in irons as a security for the future.—

"We remained in the hold of the privateer—(she was called La Nantois, until about three in the afternoon of the next day, when we finally arrived at Nantz;—The news of our taking the Chasse Marie had already preceded us;—but like all stories, gained as it was told:—at last, it was confidentially reported, that we had murdered all the crew and soldiers:—however, that was soon settled when we landed;—the peoples hatred was soon changed from us; to contempt for their own countrymen, who like ourselves marched off to Prison:—

"Situated as I was, it cannot be reasonably expected that I should give a fine description of the City of Nantz:— —the greatest novelty that I saw; was myself walking through the streets at the head of my men handcuffed:—When we arrived at the Prison, we were put into a Court-yard;—where a mottley crew of Conscripts,—Thieves, and other ragged blackguards, were amusing themselves singing republician songs, and killing vermin,—which we knew from experience, was as numerous as the sand in the sea;—we were greeted as companions;—and one fellow, stepped forward in the name of the rest to demand our footing;—ten sols from each was the demand:—First

of all, we were as poor as Job, and not as much money among us as would fetch half the sum :— —finding that we had no money ;—It was suggested, that a shirt or two would soon find the amounts ;—all would not do,—we sent the fellow about his business :—This fellow soon returned from his companions saying—That since we had no money to give, or would not give it ;—That we must empty their tubs, and sweep the yard ;—and he actually presented me with a broom—I took it ; and gave him such a crack on the head with the hard end of it,—that it sent him reeling for several paces,—this settled the business,—for the rest of the gentry seeing the result of the nogciation, politely left it to our generosity for another time.—

" —We had not been long in the Prison yard, before we were all called out into the Jailors appartment—where we found General Dumuy,—the Commandant of the Town ;—he spoke English remarkably well ;—after many questions relative to the Chasse Marie, he proposed our entering into the French service ;—That I should be a Lieutenant de Vaisseau ; and all my men made master gunners ;— —we rejected his proposal with indignation, and felt proud of the opportunity of doing it ;—so we all retired to our Straw :—

" The place where we were confined : was a large room ;—and about fifty in Number, frenchmen and all ;—The Jailor was good enough to give us a few bundles of clean straw ;—but the corner allotted for us, was at the further end from the window,—and where the Tub was placed ;— —in the middle of the night we were nearly suffocated by the stench ;—and although we had clean straw, the vermin were devouring us alive :— —In the morning, a fresh effluvia saluted our noses,—Garlic, stinking oil, and tobacco :— —at last about eight o'clock we were all let out into the Court-yard,—and it took us nearly an hour to rid our clothes of the vermin,— —after that,—we had a regular good wash at the pump.—Then to Breakfast on our Brown Bread :— — —I had been amusing myself

reading the names of many poor wretches who had suffered during the Revolution ;— —hundreds were cut out on the walls,—especially in reference to that Villain Fouché,— who used to take the poor unfortunate Royalists out on the River tie them two and two,—a Male and a Female ; then drown them ;—this mode of Death, he called Le Marriage de Nantes ;—among the many things on the walls, I remarked those two lines—

> " ' On dit que, en se mariant, que l'on a tort ;
> Mais ; en se mariant à Nantes, l'on trouvo la mort.'

" All of a sudden I lost sight of all my crew, nor could I find them any—where ;—I enquired of the Jailor about them,—who informed me, that General Dumuy had sent for them and that they were all going into the French service ;— —shocked at this intelligence and fearful they might be enticed and bribed away from their Duty— —I immediately told the Jailor that I was going also, and wondered why they had not sent for me.— —' Come along with me said he and I'll take you to the General ;— I went with him to the Generals house and found my men, standing round a Table with about twenty french crowns piled up before each of them.— —Seeing this ; I was convinced, that without some effort on my side, that I should lose them :— —five of them had actually agreed to enter ;—these were Irish :—The General thought that I was come to offer myself for the french Service and accept his promise of being a Lieutenant de Vaisseau, but I soon convinced him to the contrary :

" I, said to him—General Dumuy,—I am sorry to find the French Navy so hard up for men that you are obliged to have—recource to the necessity, of solliciting the services of your greatest enemy the English ;— —Those men that you are trying so much to coax, that they may become Traitors to their King and Country, cannot be faithful to you :—for if they will not serve their own, they will not serve yours :—and let me tell you Sir—That this

proceeding is neither fair nor honorable, and it is beneath the dignity of a General ;— —And as for you ye Traitors, and unworthy of the name of Englishmen, and British Seamen—can you hesitate between honor and treachery ?— Return back to the prison, and show that you are ashamed of what you have done ;—and that there still remains a spark of british feeling :—show yourselves worthy of your noble King and Country.— —But if on the other hand, any-one of you, enter into this detestable service ; depend upon it, you will all be brought to Justice one day or other— —and If I die on the road ; my Ghost shall haunt you, until I drive all your necks into the halter— —Rude as my appeal was it had the desired effect,—I brought them all back with me to Prison.—

"The next morning, we were ordered to prepare for our march to the dépôt at Verdun,—five hundred miles distant :— —The manner of our departure, was a fac simile of all the rest, with very little difference :— —At eight o'clock in the morning on the 21st of August 1804—the Gen-d'armes came and demanded our bodies of the Jailor ;— —while the serjeant was signing the receipts, and other papers ;—his comrades were busily employed, in putting us on the handcuffs, and chaining us two and two :—and really they did it so very dexterously, that I think they must have been quite accustomed to it.—

"The prison doors were thrown open, and out we marched ;—each of us had our dinner under the arm—a brown loaf—we passed through a great part of the Town before we were on the high road ;— —and soon began to feel the effects of walking ;—we had scarcely proceeded above ten miles, when we found ourselves so exausted, that we despaired reaching the prison, where we were to halt for the night :— —the miserable remains of our money, the men had spent in brandy :— —most of them were so drunk that a cart was hired to take them on ;—the others that could walk, were obliged to get on suffering heat, hunger,—fatigue, and Ill usage :—It was nearly eight

o'clock before we entered the prison ;—consequently too late to rid ourselves of some of the vermin with which we were swarming :—Now it was that we began to feel real sufferings.—

" Our pound and a half of bread was served out to us every evening as we entered the prison ;—It was the same they gave to the soldiers ;—sometimes good, sometimes bad,—but at all times no great things :—as for water, t'was brought for us in buckets like watering horses :—stick our heads into it and swig heartily.— —

" On entering our prison, we were put into the Condemned cells, allotted for felons and galley slaves :—It was at the back of the military bakehouse :—and at that time, in full glow to make bread for four thousand troops, that were to pass through, the next day, on their way to the Camp at Boulogne :—I cannot describe what I suffered that night :—but can only compare it with the Black Hole in Calcutta :— —It was during the dog days, and the natural heat was upwards of 85°— —but that which struck through the walls from the ovens, was beyond endurance — —we agreed to take it in turns to breathe at the grated window ; and those who retired therefrom, had recourse to bathing their heads in a bucket of water—sleep was out of the question—the myriads of fleas and lice, added to our misery—

" In this horrible situation, we were kept twelve hours ; —for it was past eight o'clock before the gen' d'armes came for us :—several of the men appeared lifeless :—both from their recent drunkenness,—and what they had suffered during the night,—were obliged to be carried into a Cart—and to crown all ;—every one was in a fair way, of being ate up by the Itch ;— —It would be useless for me, to relate every trivial circumstance that occurred during six weeks march ;—and, in the most filthy, loathsome, prisons ;—suffering a repetition in every respect.—In going through any of the Towns ; not the least sentiment of feeling, or compassion was shown us ;—not even by the

sex, whose finer feelings might give way to pity now and then;—but on the contrary:—the revolution had changed their dispositions therefore; nothing in point of good nature could be expected from them.—As for the men; they looked on it as a matter of course:—God knows what their policy was, for taking us through most of the streets, of every Town we passed through—no doubt, but it was to make a public exibition of us.— —When I landed, I fortunately put on a new suit of Clothes; but from lying in so many fifthy prisons, they began to look very bad;—my shoes were worn off my feet; nor had I the means of procuring another pair;—the men were the same.—In fact, we looked like a set of half starved miserable wretches, instead of British seamen:—Yet; still the heart of oak remained.—

"Our route was along the banks of the Loire, whose beauty and scenery,—I will leave for others to describe, who have nothing but pleasure to think of.— —From the delays we met with on the road, it was more than five weeks before we reached Tours:—our feet were cut in a most shocking manner: and the mud had got in, by way of filling up the chinks;—ever since our departure from Nantz, we existed on our brown bread and water.—

"On our arrival at Tours, we were told, that we were to remain there five days.—The Prison was spacious,—the rooms good and airy,—the straw clean,—and a kind Jailor who spoke a little English;—he gave us some onions to eat with our brown bread,—and six bottles of small wine;— —In the course of the evening, he informed me that there was a rich Englishman residing at Tours;—This was glorious news for us;—I wrote a note to him,—and he came into the Prison about ten o'clock,— —we were all asleep on our straw, when our doors were unlocked: and I was immediately taken by the hand and led forth, (all my men following) to the Jailors appartment by this worthy countryman;—It was a Mr. Cane, well known at Tours for every virtue that could grace the

human heart:—I related to him briefly my shipwreck;—and the treatment I had undergone since:—during this interval of time, the Jailor was preparing a pork chop for each of us;—and some good wine:—we all sat down together: but, my heart was so full of Joy and grief, mingled, that I could eat nothing;—It was the first time since our landing, that we experienced either kindness or pity;—all my men were in tears, and their honest hearts, gave full vent to feelings of gratitude, and thankfulness, to this good Samaritan;—I took a glass of warm wine,—bade good Night to Mr. Cane who was to come again the next morning;—and we all retired to good beds, that were prepared for each of us;—however welcome a bed might be,—considering, that I had slept on nothing but straw,—I felt extremely uncomfortable;—I kept tossing, and turning, from one side to the other:—at last, I took a blanket and a pillow,—laid myself down on the brick floor;—and in few minutes was fast asleep;—The next morning about nine o'clock, Mr. Cane came and took me out into town, under his responsibility, by permission from the Prefect.— —My clothes were in good order;—my shoes, were made of soft leather not to hurt my feet.—I was introduced to his family, whose kindness and attention I shall never forget:—After breakfast, we went to the Sousprefect,—who paid me up all my marching money; which ought to have been given me at Nantz:—I received Seven pounds:—and each of my men thirty shillings:— —We remained here about ten days,—quite sufficient to recruit our strength:—and before we set out;—I received more money on my own private account—by—a bill on my Friends;—with plenty money in my pockets—I was become my lord anglais;— —We bade a grateful adieu to Mr. Cane, and his Family;—and set out for the first time, without our hand-cuffs, and strength regained by our good living at Tours:— —We got on extremely well for the first five or six miles;— —but sailor like: the men would stop and drink brandy grog, at every—public house on the

road;—and were generally drunk before they entered the Prisons:— —They invariably marched better when drunk, than sober;—in one case—they would stagger, and roll along, either quarrelling or singing;—while on the other hand, they would move on as sulkey as Mules, and only go by driving.—

"The scenery on the banks of the Loire appeared now to us, really beautiful and enchanting;—the Islands in the midst of the River, looked like emeralds set in silver:—here the peasantry on a Sunday, retires from their daily occupations—to enjoy the rustic dance.

"Every necessary of life is extremely cheap in this part of the country:—with a small income, a family may live quite respectable, comfortable, and happy:—Bread, Fruit, and vegetables, may be had almost for nothing:—a large Turkey, or a goose of Ten pounds weight, may be had for Two shillings:— —Three days after we left Tours we arrived at Orleans; and put into the most filthy prison we had ever been in yet.—There were about Sixty wretches half naked, and full of vermin and the stench was equal to the one at Nantz:—when the Jailor brought us in our bread;—I let him know, that we could afford to pay for a supper and another appartment:—on this information, he let us out of that wretched den of misery, into a good and comfortable room to dine in; and showed us another, with more beds made up in it than we wanted:— —The next morning I was surprized by a visit from an English gentleman, Mr. Hewitson Surgeon in His Majesty's Navy;—under whose responsibility I went into Town, and was introduced to his family, also to a Mr. Thompson, M.P.—who was there for the benefit of his health, and not made a detenue of!!—

"In passing by the market place, I was struck with the beautiful statue of Joan d'Arc;—it is of brass gilded;—She has a breast plate,—and a helmet,—with a Spear in one hand, and a shield in the other;—the attitude seems advancing;—and leading on the troops to raise the

siege of Orleans ;— — —I afterwards visited the part of the walls still remaining,—where British valour sank under superstition ;—and gave fresh courage to the broken spirits of the French.—Here began the disasters of the English army, who but a short time before, possessed nearly the whole of France,—could not with all their valor, stand before an obscure female ;—nor could the renowned Bedford,—Talbot, or Suffolk,—whose prowess stands unrivalled in the annals of history ;—ever restore—the green to their faded laurels.—

" Orleans is a very fine and populous City :—The inhabitants are industrious,—lively, and affable ;—The country around delightful ;—abounding in fish and game ; —The forests are well stored with wild boar and Deer ;— But much infested with Wolves, that make dreadful havoc in the winter :—The hills are covered with vineyards ;— and the roads on each side, are planted with Apple and Pear trees, for the benefit of the weary traveller.—

" We left Orleans ; and in three days after arrived at Melun ;—where as usual, we were put into the court-yard among a set of thieves, and other such rabble :—but here, a scene took place, which I will describe :—

" It is a customary thing, on entering a prison, the old stationers exact a footing from the new comers ;—but this Prison, seemed more rigid in the observance of these rules, than any other ;—consequently, Two fellows stepped forward, to demand from each of us, twenty sols :— — Considering ourselves as honourable prisoners of war, we were determined never to submit to this regulation, that, only concerned rascals like themselves—

" On our decided refusal, the whole of the Frenchmen stepped forward to enforce it :—we were twelve ;— —they were twenty two :— —we saw the storm gathering, and of course we prepared for action ;—we entrenched ourselves in one corner, and stood ready to receive the attack ;—the weapons we used were,—a stone tied in one corner of a handkerchief ;—this proved a most dreadful one—nor

were our antagonists aware of our being so well armed.— — The battle began on their side, with a discharge of wooden shoes ;—then they attempted to board us in the smoke ;— but were repulsed with an **Irish coat of arms* on some of them—they grew desperate, and being double our number,—and ourselves tired from a long days march ;— we were about to beat a parley :—when the door opened,— and in came nine more Englishmen !—They joined us : and at it we went with fresh vigour, and in two minutes more, John Bull—triumphed over Johnny Crapaud— — our reinforcement, were the Crew of a Collier, taken by a french privateer, and were on their road to Verdun like ourselves.—mutual congratulations took place between us, and a good dinner, and wine, made us forget this memorable battle of—'Wooden Shoes— —We wondered why the Jailor did not interfere, and prevent such conduct among his prisoners ;—but, we soon knew the reason ;—It was his policy to encourage it, as the money, found its way into his pockets.— —

"The next day, we all set out together ; — and traversed a wide extensive tract of Country, very thinly cultivated, excepting near the Villages,—which in general were filled with nothing but old men,—women and children ;—all the young men, were gone to the army encamped at Boulogne—for England :— —In two days we arrived at Chalons Sur-Marne—The weather was extremely warm, and we had been marching in the heat of the sun, which made us perspire very much ; and very languid—on our entering the Prison yard, I was so thirsty, that I took a copious draught of cold spring water—in the night I was seized with fever, which terminated in ague.— notwithstanding my illness,—I was taken on to Verdun in a Cart on some straw, still exposed to a burning sun—I suffered this way two days ; and two more prisons : before I arrived at our dépôt, and among our countrymen.—

"Ill as I was, I was obliged to crawl up to the Citadel

* A—bloody nose—supported by two black eyes.

and sign my parole :—after that, I went into Town and found a comfortable lodging.

"My fever was now so severe, that I was obliged to have medical attendance and it was two months before I could venture out, especially since the winter had set in with unusual severity.—

"An exchange of prisoners was naturally expected by every body, but, a death blow was given to all our hopes, by Buonaparte declaring, that he would not exchange the Prisoners during the war!— —with this fine prospect I set too with a will, to learn the language, and what I thought most necessary and useful to my profession.

"Verdun is a fortified Town in the province of Lorraine ;—and in the department of the Meuse.—It contains about ten thousand Inhabitants,—who, from their republican principles, and their attachment to Bounaparte, were great favorites with the mighty man.— —It was for this reason, that he sent all the English gentlemen,—Officers and Hostages, to enrich it.— —The Governor General Wirrion, was without exception one of the greatest rascals on earth,—he stuck at nothing to extort money from the miserable prisoners ;—He once shut up all the midshipmen, and masters of merchantmen in the Convent of St. Vannes :—nor would he let them out again, until, every one paid him the sum of thirty six francs :—this manœuvre rose him one thousand pounds Stlg !—Instead of having a regular parole ;—we were obliged to muster twice a day, and sign our names in a book !—should any one miss the muster—five shillings were demanded, or go to prison for a month ;—In fact, every day brought some new measure to screw money from us ; and his rapacious understrappers,—followed his example on a smaller scale, yet equally annoying.—

"At this time there were a great number of English gentlemen at Verdun ; and many of large fortunes,—so that the Town became quite a petit Paris—It gave the

PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE Anglais.

PLACE DE VERDUN.

N.° de l'enregistrement. 1188

Permission de sortir de la Place.

SIGNALEMENT

Âge.	Taille.	Cheveux et sourcils.	Front.	Nez.	Bouche.	Menton.	Visage.	
1.m Jeun	2.d	3.e	4.me	5.me	6.me	7.me	8.me	9.me

Il est permis à M.r Whitley Prisonnier de Guerre, de sortir de la Place par les portes de Paris Hautes et Mate Ou condition de rentrer, chaque jour, avant leur fermeture.

Cette présente permission est pour lui seul.

Verdun, le 30 Decembre 1812

Signature du porteur.

Le Commandant du Dépôt des Prisonniers de guerre Anglais.

FACSIMILE OF ONE OF THE BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR AT VERDUN

Ton all over France for dress and fashion :—The lodgings were neat and not very extravagant ;—but every bourgois was on the money making plan.—

" The government had the kindness to send a set of black legs from the Palais Royale, who established a gambling house, called the Bank.—rouge et noir, and the Roulette, were the ruin of many a youth and bright prospect.— —A superb race course, made up the acme of their folly :—first of all, they paid most enormously dear for the meadow :—the next, a small fee of twenty pounds for the attendance of spies and Gens d'armes :—besides other expenses.— —The frenchman alone was wise, in pocketting our—money and laughing at our—extravagance :—Drinking and smoaking Clubs were established in different parts of the Town for all classes :—and it was in such places as these, the naval youth spent both his time and money.— —One thing must be considered in their favor,—that, the most of them were without a guide or Friend, to restrain those inclinations so easy to copy,—and, without the means of living in the manner they had been formerly accustomed to.—Yet, in the most abject penury, they always managed to keep up appearances, and look as gentlemen :—Many of them, had no more than one pound four shillings per month from the French government, to provide themselves with Lodgings, and every thing else.— —The midshipmen were also the most ill used :—and almost continually in confinement—either from the caprice of the Governor, or from the desertion of some of the class, for which, all were sure to suffer.—I can say from experience, that during ten years that I was a prisoner ; Seven were passed in confinement.— —

" There was a committee established at Verdun, for the management of the monies, arising from the numerous subscriptions of our countrymen in England,—But, instead of its being placed in the hands of an officer of rank, and a prisoner of war ;—it was solely in the power of individuals, who were detained in the country :—conse-

quently, could have no matter of right whatever with it.—as it was solely subscribed for the Prisoners of war ;—but it was only among a set of scoundrels, who never dared show their faces again in England ; that this money was distributed—There were a number of Despards gang ; such as Taylors, and shoemakers, who all received a monthly allowance ;—a fellow by the name of Green, who boasted of having been a highway robber, and had an arm broke by a shot from a pistol, in attempting to rob a gentleman : here he was in no dread of the gallows :—being made clerk of the race course !—and received a monthly allowance, from the honorable prisoners fund, sufficient to keep him and his girl !—A major of the marines, having his half pay,—also received three pounds sterling per month.—Another broken down gentleman by the name of R—s—d—received three pounds, per month ; but his feelings were wounded beyond measure, at his name appearing on the charitable list.— —not one of the poor midshipmen who were the most entitled to it, ever received a farthing— —although, their relations and Friends subscribed handsomely towards it, with the intention, most certainly, that they would receive their portion.—

"In September 1805, Bounaparte passed through Verdun at the head of a hundred thousand troops ;—and six weeks after, he made his triumphant entry into Vienna.—These rapid conquests seemed to rivet our chains the closer, and, that the war would only end with his life.—It was also about the month of November, that we heard of the Battle of Trafalgar ; where the immortal Nelson closed his career of glory :—at this time, all the midshipmen to the number of about seventy, were confined in a Convent—at the Citadel.—a subscription was rose among us, to have a supper and wine :—and although, far from home, and borne down by misfortunes, we particepated in the Joy of the Victory ;—and drank a silent bumper to the memory of Nelson.—The French papers claimed the victory, and in many parts of France, were

public rejoicings on account of it! and many are no wiser to this day.—

"Many of the prisoners had been fortunate enough, to make their escape and reach England in safety.—our dépôt of confinement was so far inland, that there was no prospect of getting away, excepting by the way of Germany.—I had been three years a prisoner, out of that, I had been two years confined in the Citadel:—in fact, all the midshipmen were,—with the exception of some two or three: who were always permitted to remain unmolested; —there were reasons for that piece of indulgence, best known to themselves.—

"An order arrived at Verdun from the Minister of war, to remove all the midshipmen to Sarre-libre,—Valenciennes, and Givet, in three divisions.—and there to remain in confinement during the war.—Two divisions had already marched off—I was among the last, and was to have gone off like the rest—in a few days more.—But, under these circumstances,—I determined with a friend Doctor W^m^ Porteus, of making our escape.— — —Parole was out of the question when we were obliged to muster twice a day;—and subject to the caprices of the Governor to shut us up—whenever he pleased: from the Idea only, of raising a sum of money, to give us our liberty again.— Here I knew from the Generals Secretary himself; that I was going to be shut up in a Barracks for the rest of the war; which seemed never to be at an end:—consequently —I started with the hopes of soon reaching our dear Native Land.— —We had no difficulty in procuring every thing we wanted;—such as money, provisions, and charts of the departments.—On the 8^th^ of October 1807—about half past eight in the evening, we succeeded in getting down the ramparts by a rope;—the Doctor got down first,—but the rope broke with me, when I was half way down;—I fell in among some stones and sprained an ancle:—The noise alarmed one of the centinels,—a raw conscript, who only cried out 'qui vive.—

"I got up and limped along, and although in great pain, I managed to walk seven Leagues that night;—before daylight we were under the walls of the Town of St. Mihiel, a Town on the River Meuse.— —we found ourselves the wrong side of the river for shelter—we crossed it, although very cold, and got into a thick wood, where we remained in perfect security during the day.— —It rained incessantly;—the Trees afforded us no shelter,—on the contrary, the droppings were worse than the rain.—about nine o'clock,—we heard the report of two guns fired from the Citadel of Verdun, announcing the desertion of two prisoners of war;—This notice sets all the peasantry on the alert, as the reward for our apprehension is worth receiving,—about four pounds for each.— —We remained in this wood the whole day;—we could see the road, and the Gens d'arms scouring along in all directions in pursuit of us—we were determined to stick to the bye roads—only.—

"We did not leave the wood until it was quite dark;—It was extremely cold, and we were wet through to the skin;— —on the road towards Commercy,—we heard several people behind us, coming on at smart pace, and talking rather loud;— —fearing that the might be Gens d'armes—we layed down in a ditch behind some bushes:—they were labourers returning from their work; their conversation was about ourselves and that there were Soldiers out in all directions looking for us;—and that we had been seen on the road to Nancy.— —We were obliged to go through this Town, or return back to the wood.—It was raining very hard, and the night dark and stormy:—therefore, we concluded that no one would venture out to look after us, especially on an uncertainty.— —Just as we were entering the town, we heard some horsemen coming out towards us;—there was no shelter;—a wall was on one side, and a Mill stream on the other:—we had not a moment to spare,—we went into the water up to the Middle, and hid ourselves behind the

Mill wheel:—They were four Gen d'armes,—and one of them actually rode into the stream to water his horse:—and was not five paces more from where we stood, shivering with fear and cold:—he went on after the others and we came out of our hiding place;— —wet as we were, we passed through the Town in a rapid quick march, and soon gained the high road to Vocoleurs—the birth place of Joan d'Arc—We had walked nearly Six leagues, and were not far from the Town, but unfortunately missed the bridge in the dark, and went on two miles out of our road towards Bar-le-duc.— —There was a small public house on the road—and we ventured to knock to get some rest and refreshment if we could;—we knocked again:—when a Sturdy old man of about fifty let us in— —as soon as he lit the lamp,—and looked at us,—he said,—I know who you are Gentlemen,—but be tranquil,—you are safe in my house;—we did not relish this reception at first, but we had no reason to complain;—on the contrary providence guided us there to a friend;—his wife got up and soon made a blazing fire;— —we had some supper of bacon and eggs—Country fare every where.—The old man persuaded us to go to bed, and that he would call us about daylight, —and be our guide for the next two leagues—we followed his advice, and slept three hours:— —this quite renovated us, and the old woman had dried all our clothes.— —Just before daylight, we set out with the old man as our guide, and passed through Vocoleurs, without seeing any one— —He mentioned that, the Gendarmes had been to his house the day before, and told him of our desertion from Verdun:—and if we should happen to enter his house during the night, to inform them of it.— — — —He had lost three sons in the army,—and his eldest the only one left was saved from the cruelty of the Russians under General Swarrow in Italy, by an English officer who happened to be in that service;—for—that very reason, he would always like the english and stand their Friend whenever he had an opportunity;—he took us through

many bye ways—for about six miles, then pointed us out the road—advising us to repose at villages, now and then without fear.—We rewarded him for his trouble ;—and thanked him besides ;—he left us to return home and we to pursue our journey.

" We saw a village on our right, that seemed to be one where we might repose ourselves for the day :—as our marching must be all night work :—we went— — —and found it as we wished—A clean comfortable auberge, and no Gendarmes in the environs :—we breakfasted on Coffee and eggs ;—then went to bed leaving orders to be called at four o'clock.— —Here we reposed most delightfully ; but four o'clock came much quicker than we expected ;—we got up quite refreshed and made a hearty dinner.—

" It was Sunday, and the lads of the village with their Lasses, were dancing quadrilles under the Tree of Liberty while others were enjoying themselves with some twopenny wine ;—We passed for young Students returning home from Paris ;—and to avoid suspicion, we Joined in, and had one dance, then bade them good night.—

" It was about eight o'clock before we set out from this hospitable village :—but, it was one of the most beautiful moon light nights that ever shone out of the heavens :—The road we were travelling, is not a common one ;—consequently, not much known to our T:Gs at the present period ; and yet, it is one of the most beautiful for scenery in France—it is chiefly through immense forests ;—we were sorry that imperious necessity compelled us to travel by night, otherwise, we could have given some description of the Country :—This night was perfectly calm, not a breath of wind sufficient to shake a leaf.— —There is an awful charm, in passing through a dark forest :—The moon only seen at intervals through the Trees.—Here it was for the first time, that we heard the dreadful howlings of the wolf :—which was answered by others at a distance :—sometimes, he seemed quite close to us,—and several times we heard the rustling of his passing through

the brush wood:—Then an owl with Too-whoo—would Join the concert,—then all would be still again for a few minutes:— —

"Doctor and I kept on walking, and talking,—and at eleven o'clock we were twelve miles from the village from whence we started,—and passed through the Town of Colombia, and at Two we arrived at Vezilize.—

"It was in this dismal and dirty Town, that we were bothered for nearly an hour;—so difficult it appeared to find the right road again—In fact, it was a complete labyrinth—and not a soul stirring to give us a clue;—It was now getting dark and foggy,—our feet sore and rather swelled, — —the smallest stone in our way was an annoyance.—I was laughing at the doctor having hurt his toe against a large stone:—he was dancing on one leg, swearing against the Town and the fellow that built it;— —Come along doctor said I,—we'll soon get out of this dirty hole:—I had scarcely proceeded ten yards, before I fell over a Plough, into as soft and stinking a dunghill as ever graced a dirty Village;—It was now the doctors turn to laugh in good earnest;—I was in a pretty pickle, and stunk most melodiously:—luckily, we were once more on the right road,—and I knew, that there was a small river that crossed the road at a very short distance:—Here I had a good wash, but was obliged to walk with my clothes wet through.—The fog came on thick and heavy, and we were on a long and dreary Common;—the moon had set and left us—completely in the dark—The town we were pushing forward to;—was fifteen miles off:—much too far to expect being there before daylight;— —we therefore anxiously looked forward to some house, or any other shelter for the day.—

"The fog was now become so heavy that it settled like rain on us, and had such an effect on our eyelids, that, it was with the greatest difficulty we could keep them open:—our usual gaiety had entirely left us, and we were marching along in silence;—our feet were extremely sore,

and blistered.—We walked on, in a state of stupor,—overpowered with sleep pain and fatigue;—many times I slept as I went, and I was often dreaming.—

"At last, we could stand it no longer, but down we sat at the foot of a large Tree on the road side, and in a moment were fast asleep:—the doctor awoke first, roused me up, and represented the consequence of sleeping in this heavy fog.—

"We made several efforts to rise, but had not the power, until we had rubbed our legs and Joints:—at last we got underwiegh once more, supporting each other:—with our shoes down at heel, crawling along at about two miles per hour.— —The day was Just dawning when we heard a cock crow not far from us,—'twas a welcome sound;—and in a short time we entered an Inn,—had a cup of Coffee and went to bed,— —leaving orders not to be disturbed until five o'clock, when we should get up to dinner.—

"The Idea of soon reaching England, kept up our spirits, and the dread of being retaken kept us on the alert:—this gave fresh stimulus to our exertions, and only looked forward to happier prospects.—

"Such a night's march—threw us into a very sound sleep;—nor did we think twelve hours too much of it;——we were called for dinner at the time appointed;—I found my clothes clean, dry, and comfortable,—perfectly free from the smell of the dunghill,—having been smoaked over a turf fire, thus one evil was made use of to counteract another.—

"We sat down to a most comfortable dinner;—A boiled Capon, a brace of Perdaix aux choux,—and some excellent wine;—our feet were much better, yet a little sore, but nothing that could prevent us undertaking another nights march which we were about to do.—

"At seven o'clock we started with fresh vigour, and at Nine we passed through the Town of Charmes, and crossed the bridge over the Mozelle.—we soon gained the high road to Rembervillier— —The moon was up, and beauti-

fully bright:—our route was through a dark wood the same kind as the night before:—at twelve, we stopped at an auberge procured some supper and went to bed:—at at half past two got up again;—short as the sleep was it refreshed us a great deal,—and although, we walked at the rate of four miles an hour, we could not reach Rembervillier before daylight.—there was no retreat;—on our entering the town we met a peasant, who, for a few sols, showed us the way out of the Town, which was rather an intricate kind of navigation;—this saved us a deal of trouble.—

"We stopped as a village to breakfast;—Here every thing seemed changed as if by magic;—The houses, the inhabitants,—language, and manner of living, were quite different from what they were the day before:—The weomen wore short black petticoats and red stockings;—the german language was spoken with a very peculiar twang;—they had boiled potatoes and butter milk for breakfast;—we were accommodated with coffee—cold fowl and eggs—but I could not resist the temptation of a hot potatoe;— —It was certainly a novelty to see a regular Irish breakfast in France— — —after breakfast, we took the road again, and for the first time in open daylight:—The weather was fine, cool and pleasant, and very few people to be seen:—The Country around was also changed:—instead of Oak, Beech and Ash;—the forests were of fir:—Hills were swelled into mountains, and navigable rivers into rapid water falls:— —Every person we now saw on the road was taken for a Gendarme,—like the timid deer of the Forest, our ears and eyes were constantly on the alert:— —we walked on, and arrived at a village about twelve o'clock,—the reason why we were obliged to stop was,—that our feet were again very sore;—the landlord of the Inn advised us to keep them soaking in strong pickle, made of salt and cold spring water:—we each had a tub full, and kept them in it all the time we were at dinner:—we found immediate relief;—It was

really astonishing to find how soon the swelling went down, and the blisters healed.—we hired a cart from the landlord for five francs, to carry us as far as St. Diey nine miles distant;—we set out at seven o'clock, and arrived there at nine:—At midnight, we found ourselves at the foot of the famous mountain of Bonhomme;—since we left the Cart at St. Diey, we had walked ten miles:—This mountain is one of the highest of that chain called les Vosges; It forms the frontiers and barriers of France towards Switzerland, and the Tyrol:—they are of great elevation,—and covered to the summit with firs;— —The road winds up on the right side of the mountain;—on the other is an immense deep valley, with a rapid stream that fell from rock to rock in continual waterfalls:—the road rose almost in proportion to the mountain in some places:—but in all places was quite easy for carts or carriages:—On the sides of the valley were neat Cottages built in the swiss style;—The reflection of the moon against their white washed walls, gave this enchanting valley a most beautiful appearance:— —The roads through these passes formerly:—were scarcely practicable, but Buonaparte overcame all difficulties, and made them as easy, and as safe, as any roads in France.—

"We had been more than five hours walking up this mountain; and it was daylight before that we reached the summit of it, where the village of Bonhomme Stands:—we were so tired, that we were glad to find an Inn:—we took each a large glass of hot wine, then went to bed, desiring to be called at three in the afternoon:— —Our host informed us, that there was a very fine old Roman Tower at the back of his house:—our curiosity prompted us to pay it a visit;—and really, we were delighted with the view from it;—we could plainly see the Rhine;—Towns, and villages innumerable, both in France and Germany:—our dinner was brought there to us, and we enjoyed a repast, that might be envied by any-one that is fond of the picturesque;—even Doctor Syntax himself.

"About six o'clock, we set out again with the hopes of getting out of France by daylight in the morning;—we walked on at the rate of four miles per hour;—by one o'clock in the morning we had passed through three fortified towns; Kenshiem, Menshiem, and Kaysersberg;—and about eight we were on the banks of the Rhine;—but how to get over puzzled us:—we went into a fishermans hut,—and had some milk and bread for breakfast;—the woman told us, that her husband was gone a fishing,—and that it was impossible to cross the Rhine without first being strictly examined, by the police officers,—who came there regularly every morning at nine o'clock:—This was a bitter pill for us to swallow:—we were for beating a retreat into the woods that border the River:—when in came her son, a strong sturdy boy about twelve years of age— — — — — — —he said, that if we would risk ourselves in his canoe,—he would take us across for two crowns:—the bargain was soon closed, and away we went down to the boat;—It was merely three planks nailed together, we lied down to keep her steady, as well as not to be seen, and in a half an hour the Boy landed us most dexterously in Germany:—we were so tired from this long nights march, that we were glad to repose ourselves.—

"The Rhine is a most noble river, but the water is always of a dirty yellow,—yet it is considered very wholesome, It abounds with fish, particularly large Pike, which are common at twenty five pounds weight.—We remained all day and night at the village of Saasbach; and the morning after Breakfast, we hired a covered cart to take us on to Fribourg, where we arrived at Noon.— —We put up at the Hotel de l'Europe;—where we found a most excellent *table d'hote*;— —while we were at dinner, one of the party was reading the newspaper pro-bono;—he stumbled on some Verdun news, that announced our desertion, offering at the same time a handsome reward for our apprehension:— —luckily not a remark—was made, so that squall passed off quietly:— —We hired a post

chaise to take us on to Neustadt;—as we were going out at the gates, we were stopped by the guards who demanded our names, and where we were going; we soon supplied them with French ones, and that we were merchants—going to Ulm on business;—we arrived at Neustadt about Six in the evening,—and remained there until nine the next morning.—

"This part of the country is on the borders both of Switzerland and the Tyrol;—mountainous and romantic;—The females were dressed in high caps, short petticoats, and green stockings;—the Men had tight Jackets,—broad brimmed hats,—large breeches, and stockings of all colours;—their manners rude beyond measure;—complete boors,—and if they love anything in the world, it is their pipe and a glass of snaps;—yet this was the land of music, and the birth place of such men as Gessner, whose writings gave those heavy clowns a far different character.—

"The rivulets are full of trout, and of the finest flavour, but they have no method of taking them beyond the net;—This is the Country for a fly-fisher!—The game is equally abundant, and no restrictions whatever against shooting;—every article of life is extremely cheap; and good Hock in perfection for little or nothing:—Their commerce is generally confined to their saw-mills.—

"The next morning we got into a post chaise, and arrived at Daunauishingen about three in the afternoon; this is a very remarkable Town on the borders of the Swartzen Weld:—or Black forest;—It is a principality, and owes the greatest part of its celebrity, to the source of the Noble Danube, from whence it takes its name:—The Palace is about the size of an English parsonage house, and not a better appearance:—The source of the Danube flows out of a marble fountain,—and conveyed through the gardens;—afterwards, it is Joined by several small streams from the hills, so, that by the time it reaches a little below Vienna,—there is sufficient width and depth of water, to exercise a fleet of men of war on it.—

"We left Daunauishingen the same evening and travelled all night, and arrived at Maskirk Just before daylight:—It being sunday and a day of rest;—we did not quit it again until the evening.— —It was something extraodinary that on the whole of this day, we were in a most melancholy kind of humour: both of us, seemed apprehensive of some sinister foreboding.—nor could we account for it in the least;—especially as we knew that in two days more we should be in Austria, and perfectly safe from the long arms of the french police;—we drowned our thoughts in some good punch— —got into the post chaise and set out for Ulm—which proved the place of all our future troubles and misery

"Instead of riding into the Town—we got out and walked, to avoid suspicion;—yet for all that, we were stopped by the police at the gates—who demanded our names, and where we were going:—we satisfied them with our usual precaution in such cases:—and proceeded to the Inn where the Chaise had stopped—

"We had soon seated ourselves to a dejuner à la fourchette:—and were making all possible enquiries of the Landlord about proceeding in the Packet to Vienna, which was to go that morning at ten o'clock:—the Captain came in and we arranged with him for the passage in the cabin:—the Landlord was busily employed in making us up a good basket of provisions,—when as fate would have it, in came the Commissaire de Police, and began his breakfast at the same table with us:—seeing that we were strangers,—he enquired if we were going to Vienna by the packet; on our saying that we were,—he very politely offered to sign our passports, and prevent us the trouble of going to the office;—he was quick-sighted enough to perceived that we had none, and that we were suspicious characters:—he asked who we were,— —we answered Frenchmen,—he said—show me your passports instantly, or a reference to any respectable house in Ulm:—or I will arrest you immediately:— — —finding ourselves in the Jaws of this

lion,—and at a public table, we hardly knew what to answer;— —we took him aside and told him that we were English merchants, that had unfortunately been wrecked on the coast of Prussia, and that we were travelling to Vienna, in order to meet a ship of ours at that time in the Mediterranean.— — —He said—'Are you aware that you are passing through the Kingdom of Bavaria, faithful as an ally to France;—consequently an Enemy to England. — —I must do my duty by arresting you, and keeping you in custody, until I hear from our government at Munich.— two police-men stepped forward, and we were arrested accordingly;—we were ordered into separate appartments, and all our papers and money to be taken from us, which was done.— —A police-man remained as a sentinel on each of us—here we were left to our miserable reflections,—and to ruminate on our wild goose chace:—The windows were three stories high,—consequently too high for a leap.— The centinel was rigid in his duty, and above corruption:—we had but one alternative according to the old motto—'Grin and bear it;—In the course of the day, the Commissary of Police came,—and said,—that if we would promise,—not to bribe the centinals, or offer any violence, he would allow us to be together,— —If not; that we must be moved to prison that night:—we promised everything,—and we were permitted to have the handsomest rooms at the hotel;— — —we remained here ten days feasting at the expence of the Bavarian government, on every luxury, the country or the season could afford:—At last, they received notice from Strasbourg of our desertion:—and so exact were our descriptions, sent, that, the Commissary came to see us and called us by our names;— He said—he was really sorry; that his duty laid him under the imperious necessity of arresting us:—and that if he could even; now!—with safety to himself; he would set us at Liberty;— —but,— —he had received orders to send us back to France under an escort,—and that we might take our farewell breakfast— —he also said, that

our guards on the road, would defray all our expenses, and desired us not to stint ourselves in any-thing;— —After breakfast, we were preparing for our long march back; when to our astonishment,—we saw a handsome Barouche and four horses provided for us;—we thanked the Commissary for his general good kindness towards us.—

"We entered the carriage first, and took possession of the back seats—our guards sat in front with their rifles placed in each corner;—we were continually with our wits at work how to make our escape from these fellows,—but it was next to an impossibility—If ever we had occasion to stop on the road,—the guards would get out first and Stand off about twenty yards from the carriage with their Tyrolean rifles ready cocked;—and always made us get in first.—

"We were only three days getting to Strasbourg;—but prior to our entering the Town, I perceived the guards reckoning up the whole of our expenses:— —I naturally asked the question;—If they thought to be repaid by the French, the expences they had been at on our account;—they said,—that they were certain of it,—and if they had the least doubt to the contrary,—they would set us at liberty:—I proposed for one of them to go and ascertain exactly how it would be,—and decide our fate afterwards:—but they had so much confidence in the french government, and authorities, that it was determined for us to go on.—When we arrived at the Commandant of the Gendarmirie:—we were in an instant taken possession of, and led away to the military prison.— —Before we left Ulm, all our money had been restored to us:—but the moment we entered the Jail we were again stripped of it, and thrust into a dirty cell on some filthy straw, as usual filled with fleas and lice;— —we soon felt the difference of treatment between the Bavarians and our old friends the French.— —The next day, we were taken before the Governor;—but, before we left the prison we were handcuffed, and led through the streets like felons to the

Bashaws residence.— —On our appearance he began scowling on us :—in a most contemptous manner ;—which we returned with equal looks of defiance ;—He began questioning us in a most ungentlemanly-style ;—such as Comment Jean—f—s des Anglais,— —and other terms like it, that we gave him no answer whatever :—this so enraged him,—that he ordered all our money to be distributed among the Gendarms that had been searching for us,—and to be marched off to Verdun the next morning in Irons, and on bread and water :— —This to our sorrow was obeyed to the letter.—

" If the reader will only look at a French chart, he will see that Ulm by the road we took, was upwards of three hundred miles, and nearly two hundred, we walked in six nights.—The weather was now set in with sleet and snow ; and bitter cold— — —In the morning about seven o'clock, the Gendarmes came for us ; we were strongly Ironed together and set out on our march with aching hearts and empty stomachs :—In the afternoon we arrived at Blamont with our shoes worn off our feet ;— —The prison we were put into was formerly a stable, but secured with a strong door and iron bars at a small window :—the straw was wet from the snow beating in on it through the window :— —the Jailor was a cobler who lived the other side of the street,—he brought us our brown loaf, and Jug of water— while he was with us, we bargained with him for a couple of pair of strong second hand shoes ;—we gave him each a good linen shirt and glad we were of such a chance.— The next day, when the Gendarmes came for us we were so numbed with the cold, and lying in our wet clothes, that it was with great difficulty we got underweigh :—our hats from the wet and making night caps of them, were all manner of shapes made us cut a most ridiculous figure ;— —This day our Irons were screwed on tighter than usual, which made our hands to swell and look black :— —we had nothing to eat until we got to Phalsbourg, where we received our allowance of Bread—

"There is a custom in France, prevailing at all the Theatres—should any body turn their back to the stage during the performance, it is looked upon as a very great piece of rudeness :—and notice taken of it by the Police.—a circumstance occurred at Verdun,—and perfectly connected with this part of my narrative, that I must relate it.—

"Mr. Simpson—surgeon of His majesty's ship Ranger, a Scotsman by birth, and a prisoner at Verdun ;— —he had not been long at the dépôt, consequently knew nothing of those rules or regulations ;—he dined out one day with a friendly party, and being rather fresh with champagne went to the Theatre, and took a seat in the dress boxes :—He thought, that he might hiss or applaud as he did at Plymouth, or Portsmouth ;—Once he turned his back on the scene ;—which was looked over after a great deal of noise and confusion, made by the audience in the Pit,—But when the bust of the Emperor was brought forward ; accompanied by the music playing his magnificent grand march ;—he hissed, and groaned it, with all his heart and soul ;— —he was seized by the Gendarms, and hurried off to the Tour d'Angouleme.— —The next night, he was sent off secretly to another place in the Town—and as soon as a letter could come from the Minister of war ;—he was carried off nobody knew where ;—some thought he had forfeited his life.—A twelvemonth had elapsed and he seemed lost to the world.—

"Porteus and I were feasting on our brown bread, and Jug of cold comfort, when the Jailor came, and said,—'If you will promise never to mention, what I am going to shew you :—come with me and I will introduce you to a countryman of yours.— —We did promise ;—and after taking us through several appartments,—we entered a Cell, and saw a red haired man,— —the shadow of the once fine fellow Doctor Simpson—On seeing us, he shed tears of Joy—he had been kept until within the last month, in Irons, and solitary confinement :—but what astonished us beyond every-thing, he seemed to have entirely forgotten

his native language!—It was a mixture of French, German, and English,—He kept on saying—'Oh mien liebre, was you here, I was very content,— —this was said with a broad scotch accent—the Jailor allowed us to remain with him one hour:— —we parted—calling down vengeance from above on the great Napoleon, for such a petty and unworthy piece of Tyranny—It may be supposed that he was sent there by the minister of wars order only?—On the contrary, it was De par l'Empereur!— —Whether Simpson lived to get home or not, I cannot teil,—but I was informed that he died there shortly after we left him:— — —we retired to our straw, and a bitter cold night to the bargain:— —The next morning we set out and arrived at Luneville, about three in the afternoon:—where we could have raised some money on a bill;—but we were informed, that it would be taken from us—so we were obliged to stick to our Brown Tommy.—

"On our going out of Luneville the next morning,—we were degraded in such a manner, that our spirits sunk within us, and many a bitter tear started in our eyes:—We had the honor to lead the Van of twenty four Gally-slaves;—in their proper dress, all the way to Nancy:—we were chained two and two,—and if one had occasion to stop on the road,—all the rest were obliged to stop also and wait on the gentleman and his handcuffed companion waiting as Valet de chambre—A long chain passed between the whole, and kept us in a close line;—each of those slaves had a brown loaf under his arm;— —In this manner, we walked all the way to Nancy,—raining hard and mud to the knees.—On our arrival at that beautiful Town Nancy, we were obliged to parade through the principal streets, while the slaves begged from door to door,—many a time the hand of charity was extended to us, but although nearly famishing with hunger, we only bowed our heads in silence, as a refusal to the intended kindness.— —This was the first time in all my misfortunes, that I really found my pride humbled to the dust;—and it was with

real Joy, that we entered our prison, where we soon set too on our brown loaf,—with an appetite to be envied by a City Alderman :— —We found to our great relief, that these gentry were going another road ;—and to our comfort we departed by ourselves.

"The most of those Galley-slaves,—or forçats as they are generally called, are deserters ; or refractory Conscripts—and really ; one cannot but pity them.—The system of recruiting the french Army by conscription, is still better than the method we had, to man our Navy.—The one was by ballot,—The other was by force ;—The Conscription was the main spring towards the glory of the French arms, and necessary to the greatest and most ambitious man that ever existed ;—yet, trifles pleased him, and like a child trifles displeased him ; his mind was entirely on military power :—as for his Navy ! It was merely a matter of form—had he devoted his talents to Maratime, as well as to Military tactics, I do not hesitate to say, that England would have trembled for her hard earned laurels.— —Frenchmen are much easier commanded than any other Nation ;—obedient in the extreme to their superiors :—and although blended with a kind of good humoured freedom,—yet, there is a certain respect, which is sufficient to bind man to man,—and keep at the same time the distance, due to rank and talent ; like ourselves they love and adore their country ;—like ourselves they are brave, and freely acknowledge ;—that, if the two Nations were allied, they would give law to the whole universe.

"Whenever a Conscription was demanded ; the Mayor of the Town or Village, was obliged to furnish the Prefect of the department with the names of those who are of an age to serve ;—orders are then sent to take by fair ballot, the number required ;—those who escaped, were only wanted for the Leveé en masse, or the national guard :— —The moment fate decided a young man for the service, he threw up his hat, and cried out Vive l'Empereur :—

whatever his connections might be; he marched off as a common recruit,—and rose according to his merits, bravery and immulation gained them the legion of honneur, and rapid promotion;—It was open alike to the peasant and the peer;—and he that possessed a head to plan, and a heart to execute, was sure to rise in power and honor; six weeks was quite sufficient to send a recruit to the field;—their numbers made up the deficiency of strength, that soup meagre would not allow against beef and pudding.—But their onset combined with a determination to conquer; made them a match, and equal to any troops in the world.—

"Depression in any case will weaken the courage of mankind in general; and no Nation, feels it more than the French:—They are either all courage; or all fear;—one reverse is sufficient to weaken the courage of the whole Army,—again, they are easily roused by the slightest advantage gained over the enemy;—whenever they are beaten, they invariably say, that it was through treachery: ——Desertion among the Army, was punished either with death or the galleys:—if three or more deserted and were caught:— —the oldest, was by law, considered as chef du Complot,—and accordingly shot:—nor was the Code militaire satisfied with punishing the principles:—It fell on their poor relations, already sufficiently heart broken and desgraced;—who were obliged to pay government the sum of fifteen hundred francs;—and so rigidly was this law executed, that, they must sell all their goods and chattels to raise this sum.— —The French never inflict corporal punishment on their soldiers;—they think that it disgraces the man for ever, and levels him with the brute.—

"Nancy without exception is the most regular, and beautiful built Town in France:—It contains about thirty thousand inhabitants, who are a very industrious race of people;—The fine River Mozelle runs through the Town;—the country around mountainous and woody:—The markets well supplied, and extremely cheap:—In

fact, it is one of the most desirable residences in France ;—The sex at Nancy are generally thought, the handsomest,—most agreeable, and witty in the Kingdom.—In my opinion, I think they also surpass the Pariseinnes in dress and elegance :—but one thing I remarked among the lower classes,—was, the goitre which was very common.—

" We remained here two days and then marched off to St. Mihiel, a small Town on the meuse :—Here the County assizes are held for the department of the Meuze :—It was late in the evening before we arrived, and so tired, that we were glad to go to our straw :—We remained here two days,—on account of a young girl who had been condemned to death, and was to be beheaded that day ;—she was as beautiful, and as innocent as an angel ;—this was proved afterwards ;—but too late.— — —She was a little more than seventeen years of age ;—tall and most elegantly shaped,—light brown hair and dark eyes ;—her face seemed as if it had been cast in a Grecian mould, and most beautifully fair.— — —She was sitting on her bedside with such a placid look, that would have defied any-one to find, or think her guilty :—About a quarter of an hour after we saw her ;—the Gendarmes came to conduct her to the scaffold, where the guillotine was erected in the market place :—before she left the Prison, the Sirjeant of the Gendarmes cut off her beautiful long hair,—I would have willingly sacrificed a limb to have saved her life,— — never shall I forget her farwell to every body :—especially. when she said with a religious firmness, ' I forgive my uncle ;—he has taken my life, and knows that I am innocent ;—She was led forth to execution, and in an instant, the fatal axe cut off the head of one of the most lovely flowers that ever bloomed :—

" She was left an orphan under the protection of her Uncle, who was a bachelor of good reputation and fortune, and about forty years of age :—his niece had formed an attachment to a young officer in the Army, who at that time was absent with his regiment,—but the Uncle,

instead of promoting their mutual happiness;—became Jealous, and in love with her himself;—after undergoing many persecutions, which from delicacy, she never once hinted to any of her young friends.—He had made several attempts on her person;—but finding that he would never be able to accomplish his diabolical purpose, he was determined on her ruin in another way, especially since her lover was returning home on leave for a short time:—after the last assault on her person,—he, on the next day begged pardon, saying, that he was mad drunk and did not know what he was about;—but, this last brutal rudeness was too bad to be overlooked by his niece;—who threatened both to expose and to leave him.—Knowing how very fair his reputation stood with his neighbours, and the Town in general;—he thought, that if the affair was made public, he would lose his honorable name, and probably, cut by all virtuous society:—therefore, to prevent exposure, he determined in the ruin and death of his niece.—He left the Town one night disguised as a clown, and went as far as Nancy,—at an Apothecary's shop he purchased some Arsnic and returned home the next evening,—appearing as if he had only been—to his farm in the country:—nothing could exceed his kindness towards his niece at this moment:—he seemed quite repentant of his former conduct,—his unhappy victim doubted so sudden a change, yet, her goodness forgave all, and every thing seemed to promise future tranquility:—he even consented to her union with her lover, all this,—was to lull her into security.—

"However, something occurred—which ended in a dispute;—so far, that she said—'She would bear with it no longer;—and that she would make him repent of it!—these last words were heard distinctly by two servants;—He now laid his plans for her destruction— —he found means to open her private cabinet of drawers, and placed among her trinkets a part of the Arsnic.— —The next day he took a strong dose of Tarter emetic;

complained of being very unwell, and of the coffee his niece had given him for breakfast :— —Medical assistance was sent for,—and his suspicions were confirmed by the faculty, that he had taken poison!—counter poisons were immediately given, yet he appeared dying, in great agony, —the quantity of Tartar Emetic had nearly done his business ;—and pity but what it had.—the doctors all concluded that he had been poisoned ;—his niece gave him his coffee, she made it herself :— —a magistrate was sent for, and a general enquiry was made :—then a search : —The fatal paper of Arsnic was found, and the poor innocent girl hurried off as a murderess to the Prison.— The Doctors to establish their credit, swore it was their counter-poisons, that saved his life :—

"At her trial, the two servants repeated what she said the day before ;—' that, she would make him repent of it : —together with the poison found in her drawers,— —she was condemned, and suffered.—Conscience, which always haunts the wicked, would not allow this wretch to possess a moment of rest :—he wandered about,—seeking in dissipation, to drown his haunted soul in wine :—He one day, in a fit of despair and drunkenness, confessed his guilt to an officer of Justice :—he was arrested and sent to Prison,—the Apothecary from whom he purchaced the Arsnic swore to his person ;— —Another from whom he procured the Tartar emetic ;—The person from whom he procured the false keys ;—he was tried for perjury, and the murder of his niece :—He was ordered by the supreme Tribunal at Paris, to suffer death,—First ; his right hand was chopped of ;—then his head—

"After this Tragical occurrence, we set out towards Verdun seven leagues distant :—It rained hard all day,—or rather a sleet, that cut our faces and ears very much :—we arrived at Verdun about four in the afternoon, and led through bye-ways to the Citadel, to avoid meeting any of our Countrymen :—we were put into the Tower of Angouleme,—and only two persons were allowed to visit us,—

who privately brought us in some money:—our provisions were supplied by the Jailor, who made us pay most enormously dear for them:— —we were kept in separate cells, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, without any fire:—the snow, and sleet used to beat in on our beds; nor were we allowed any spirits or wine

"Here we remained a month, in bitter cold weather:—we underwent a strict examination relative to our route;—we answered what we pleased:— —not choosing to compromise ourselves, or the people who had been kind to us on the road;— —At last the day arrived, when we were to leave Verdun for the Souterrains of Bitche.—The snow was deep on the ground, and a piercing North east wind right in our faces,—we were put into an open cart handcuffed, and on some straw:—Five Gendarmes were sent to escort two such desperate fellows as we were;—In the evening, we arrived at Marslatours Seven leagues from Verdun;—when we alighted from the cart,—the guards conducted us towards the Prison, which to our great astonishment, was under the Parish Church in one of the vaults.— —We hesitated at the entrance,—perhaps superstition lent her aid to prevent us?— —It was soon decided by the Jailor thrusting us forward, and left us to grope our way towards a corner, where we might find our bed of straw;—instead of which, we stumbled on a heap of human bones!—We thought that it smelled deadly, but now it really felt so:—sailors, of all persons in the world are the most superstitious:—and if we had a horrible feeling on us at this moment, let any of our readers think themselves in our situation—then Judge.

"It was fortunate for me, that I had a doctor for my companion,—or I should not have slept a wink for the night;—it seemed to him, a mine of wealth:—for during two long hours, I was obliged to listen to all the theory and practice of anatomy:—so that, by the morning, I was acquainted and quite familiar with the Craniums and paraphernelia of our ghostly friends;—and only left the

impression, that my own ribs and trucks would soon be like them :—

" In the morning we again set out on our Journey ;—it was a clear sharp frosty morning, the Two Gendarmes were so good as to allow us to march without our Irons ;—one of them was a kind and pleasant fellow,—full of good humour and anecdote,—he told us a very pleasing one.—

" Buonaparte passing through Marslatours,—to Join the grand army for the invasion of Prussia ;—stopt at the grand auberge of the village to breakfast ;—quite unexpectedly :— —In every petty village, there is a Mayor,—and a Sub,—who performs his duty during his absence ;—At this critical moment ;—nobody could find either of them to come and compliment the Emperor on his arrival ;—at last, the Mayor was found like Cincinatus at the plough-tail :— —he ran home put on his best coat, ' blue celeste,—and his sash—(tri-coloured) the badge of his dignity, then waited on the mighty man of war ;—He stood at the entrance of the room,—and made several efforts to speak,—but impossible ;— —he only kept bowing and scraping ;—at last, he was so fascinated by Buonapartes keen and scrutinizing eye ;—that he appeared to have the same effect on him ; that a Rattlesnake has on a poor little squirrel—

" An old shoe-maker nearly seventy years of age, and a true fac-simile of Salamanca's Knight, stood close behind the poor trembling Mayor ;—saying every now and then—' Parle donc bête que tu es,—at last his patience was entirely worn out ;—he caught hold of the Mayor, shoved him out, saying, that *he* would speak to the Emperor pour l'honneur du Village— —

" He first took off his greasy cotton night cap with his left hand :— —with his right ; in a style quite Theatrical, took his horn spectacles from his nose—bending himself with Marslatourian elegance,—he began thus :—

" Dit donc mon Empereur :—vous etes en route, pour battre ces B— —s des Prussiens—nous esperons, de vous

voir, retournér en France couvert da gloire ;—tous ce que I'ai a nous dire mon Empereur; est—Que Cesar; et Alexandre; n'etoient que des I—n—F—s en comparaison de vous.—

" Buonaparte was almost convulsed with laughter ;—he asked the old man if he had any sons ;—he answered ;—'Two in your Guards my Emperor—Their names were taken down, and the old man saw them officers,—and himself a comfortable pension.—

" About three in the Afternoon, we arrived at Metz ;—we were not put into the common receptacle for felons,—but put into a room with three beds in it :— —There was an Inmate already there ; a french conscript ;—

" We saw by his manners, that he was above the common class of individuals,—so we cordially invited him to partake of our dinner,—which he accepted with great reluctance :— — —we were astonished at his elegant address, and figure ;— — —his face was not of the handsomest,—for the small pox had made dreadful ravages— —In the course of the evening we found him a most interesting companion ;—and before we went to bed, he told us that—he was the Count de la Rochaimont— —He had emigrated with what remained of his family during the Revolution, and quite a child ;— —When Buonaparte granted them an Amnesty,—he returned to France, hoping to get some of his patrimonial property.— —Buonaparte gave him the rank of chef d'escadron :—and ordered him to Join his regiment without delay ;—this was really kind and generous to an emigrant ; on his part.—But there happened to be an old lady of great fortune :—eighty years of age,—that wished to leave it to the Rochaimont family—proposed to marry him, which he most gratefully accepted.—

" Buonaparte having himself an eye on the old lady's property, was enraged beyond all bounds at this piece of information :— —he ordered poor Rochaimont off to Join his regiment ;— —but he remained behind in Paris and

was married,—for disobedience of orders, he was ordered off as a common soldier to Join the corps of artillery at Metz, and escorted there as a prisoner:—I have never seen him since, but I believe that he holds a very high rank in the Royal guards—at this moment.—

"The next day we set out for Bitche,—we were three days on our road,—in irons as usual,—nothing worth remarking occurred until we saw that celebrated fortress on the top of a high mountain;—It was the place of residence,—perhaps for the war, of many a bright and enterprizing fellow:—who only kept his hopes alive, anticipating the death of Buonaparte:—It was here the British prisoner of War, dragged on an existence of pining and wretched misery:—Frenchmen may say what they please about prison ships:—but they were Palaces in comparison with the Fort of Bitche:—

"This is one of the strongest fortresses in Europe;—It is the chef-d'œuvre of the celebrated Vauban;—built on a solid rock that overlooks the whole country around, and capable of standing a very long siege;—numerous and immense souterrains are cut out of the solid rock, for troops and Cattle in cases of necessity;—they were forty feet underground;—and it was in those deep,—damp Caverns that five or Six hundred british prisoners were confined.—

"It was nearly dark before we entered the town;—and quite so by the time we got up to the Fort:—we went over several draw-bridges,—and shortly after entered the court yard;—here our Irons were taken off:—on our approaching the souterrains, we heard a confused noise underground;—when the door was opened, we heard an uproar below among our unhappy countrymen;—we descended about fifty steps, and found ourselves, in a place resembling the infernal regions:—lights were shewn in all directions:—six blazing wood fires:—all hands came forward to shake hands and welcome us;—and claim us to drown melancholy at a punch party:—we looked around us with astonish-

ment;—some were singing,—some were gambling,—others fighting;—such a scene of careless misery, I never beheld before;—we Joined in with some of our own class, and after a good supper, we retired to our straw mattress:—

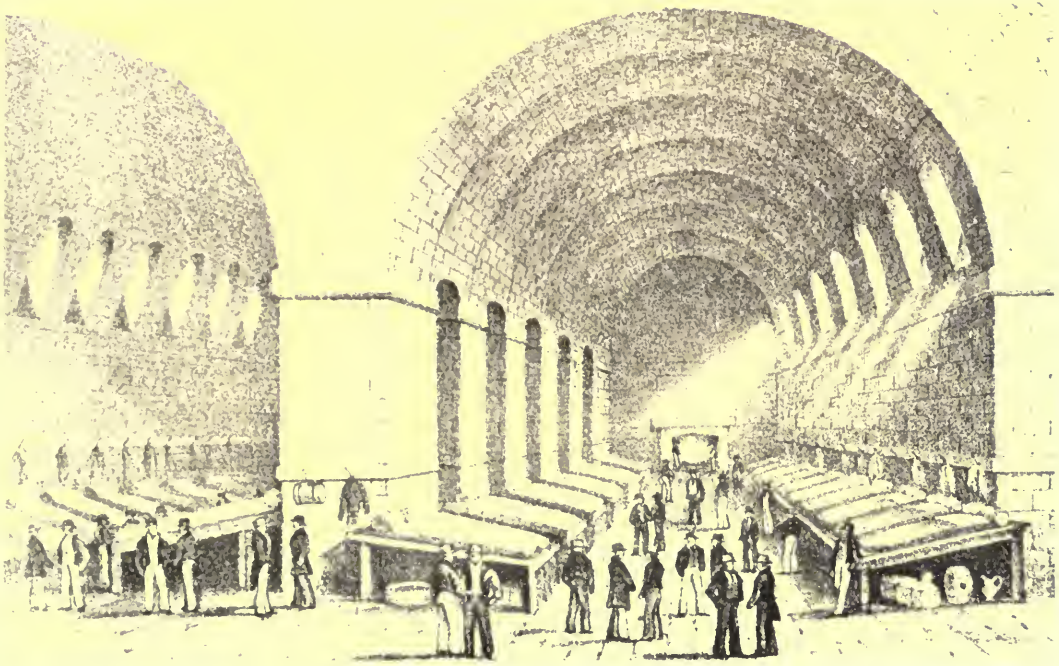
"There were about five hundred prisoners at Bitche, divided into two Caverns or Souterrains,—the largest was for the common sailors:—the other for officers;—and those considered as such:— — —

"Monsieur Vauban, seems to have combined his talents and skill to render the Fort of Bitche impregnable; nature assisted him in every-thing he wished for;—It afforded him an excellent spring of water, and a solid rock for his defence:— —from its well known security; It was converted into a state prison,—or rather a supernumary Bastile;—here many a poor wretch lingered out their miserable remains of existence;—victims to that Infamous strumpet, Pompadour and others like her:—

"It was here in those horrid caverns, forty feet underground, that the British prisoner of war was shut up for years:—and humble submission to the Governor alone; saved him from the addition of an Iron collar round his neck, with a chain thirty pounds weight attached to it:— —The souterrains were very large;—one hundred and fifty feet—by fifty—fitted up with guard beds on each side, made of strong oak;—a straw matrass and a blanket was the bed allowed for two officers;— —the place was kept as clean as the situation would admit of:—but it was so infested with rats;—that, they used to destroy all our provisions and clothes;—we were in darkness all day;— — from the small windows—rays of light,—would afford us sufficient at times, to read by—

"In the forenoon, we were permitted to enjoy two hours—in the Court yard—or; upon deck—as we used to call it;—The same again in the afternoon, during which time, the servants were employed in cleaning out the souterrains, and procuring fresh water.—

"It was in these infernal regions, many a bright youth



IN ONE OF THE OFFICERS' DUNGEONS AT ETCHE

became the victim to all kinds of vices:—Drinking,—Gambling, and smoaking, were a constant repetition, and generally ended in boxing matches:—the place was so damp, that, at times, our blankets felt as if they had been out all night in the dew.— —consequently, it ended in giving the most hardy constitutions Rheumatisms for life; —and crippled the weaker.— —

"The prisoners—were divided into messes, and most generally classed according to their rank, situation, and temper:—Those who were studious, naturally avoided the noisey Clubs;— —Brandy and Gin was so cheap, that any-one who liked, might get drunk for three-pence:—Yet, among all those horrors;—deaths were not so frequent as in other dépôts;— —but severities toward the prisoners, were carried to a greater length, and often ended in death.—The Governor:—General Maisonneuve—one of the most Ignorant beings that ever existed;—bore the spite of a devil towards all English, and sought every occasion to annoy them.

"He was at the begining of the Revolution;—Male nurse at the hospital at Metz;—during the time the guillotine made such dreadful havoc, he led on the mob, and gloried in exhibiting his sword drenched in the blood of his Countrymen:— —having been a drummer in India where he lost his arm;—gave him some Idea of military tactics;—but his talents,— —nor his courage, ever cut him out to figure on the field of Battle;—And Boney knew his Generals so well, that this old sinner, was placed as Governor of Bitche,—free from all danger,—and at full liberty, to flourish his maiden sword over a few miserable prisoners of war.—He was extremely clever at espionage; but never could he keep it a secret:—Desertions from this Depot were more frequent than any other, and attended with more success, from its proximity to the Rhine:—yet, on the other hand,—the height of the ramparts, caused several deaths, and many a broken limb.—

"It was found out by the prisoners, that the souterrains

communicated with several Sally ports under the ramparts :—Two clever fellows,—Cox, and Marshall, belonging to Capt. J. Brenton's Ship the Minerve, undertook to open the doors and set the prisoners at liberty,—The one was a Carpenter, the other a Smith,—They succeeded so well, that they opened all the doors in one day ! !—

" Parties were made— ;—some were making up small bundles holding a change of linen, or a spare pair of shoes ;— —others were preparing three or four days provisions ;— —The plan, was to separate, and each party to chose their own road according to their own Judgment : —Nine o'clock was the hour appointed for leaving the Souterrain,—Cox and Marshall were to lead the way ;— every thing seemed favourable for the enterprize ;—a dark misty night,—and the Fort wrapt in perfect silence :— The hour was come ;—and shaking hands with each other like parting friends going on a dangerous expedition,— The two men led the way ;—the prisoners following in silence two and two—They were within a few yards of the sally-port ;—when Cox thought he heard some one breathe Just before him ;— —he said to Marshall ;—' did you hear that ! !— —' no—said the other,' damme get on, what are you afraid of :—almost directly after, some one touched Cox on the shoulder :—he asked Marshall if it was him :— At that moment, he fell dead, a sword had gone through his heart :— —Marshall gave the alarm :— —lights where then shewn by a party of soldiers who were lying in wait in the passage ;—Marshall had proceeded too far to retreat back again ;—he called aloud to the prisoners that they were betrayed ;— —While they were making a rush, back into their souterrain ;—this poor but brave fellow seeing no chance of saving his life, prepared to defend it as long as he could :—with his oaken cudgel, he knocked down the two foremost :—fought his way to the sally port, where he fell dead covered with bayonnet wounds ;—The soldiers then came into the Souterrain, and began beating the prisoners with the flats of their sabres :—many of them

were desperately wounded.— —There was a Jersey man among the prisoners, who had fled from Justice for murder—and got over to France;—he was called Big Williams—but his proper name was Bouchel.—This was the villain that gave information to the Governor of all the prisoners movements;—In fact he was paid as a spy.

"The next morning,—most of the prisoners were taken away, and put into different cachots,—formerly the state prisons:—The bodies of Cox and Marshall, were brought into the court yard,—dreadfully mutilated;—without any covering whatever: and placed as a spectacle, and as an example to the rest:— —The old General knew of the prisoners going to desert;—consequently, had it in his power to prevent it, in a manner, worthy of the name and character of a soldier,—rather than like a Murderer:— —But he, assembled his veteran soldiers, flourished his maiden sword, and led them to the scene of action,—determined to shed some blood, no matter how;—Assassination had once been quite familiar to him:—therefore—he preferred embracing his hands in the carnage and blood of a few defenceless prisoners of war; than seek the genuine laurels,—worthy of a General officer on the honorable field of battle:—He like a murdering savage, boasted that it was himself who ran Cox through the body with his sword:—that he knew where to 'toucher au cœur.—but, he never said a single word about the crack on the head he received from Marshall:—he might for the remainder of his life, sing the praises of its thickness:—he had the decency to wear a night cap, and complain of a head-ache:—His character—was—low,—Ignorant,—vain,—cruel,—and avaricious;—flattery was the only key to his favour:—such was the brutal monster who commanded the British prisoners of war at the Fort of Bitche; and many a bitter tear has been shed by them, occasioned by his cruelties:—

"It was in this den of misery I remained nearly two years, experiencing like the rest, all the roughs and

smooths as they came on :— —The Minister of war, at last sent an order that some of the quiet characters might be permitted to go to the dépôt of Sarre-Libre :—I was among the number allowed to go :—and I left Bitche considering it to be one of the happiest days of my life.—

"In the month of November, one very fine frosty morning, we were marched off, handcuffed to Sarre Libre. —When we arrived at the summit of the hill, where we could behold Bitche for the last time :—we stood still a moment, and gave it three hearty groans :— —we marched seven leagues to a Town called Sargumines,— and put into a most shocking prison.—

"In a small court-yard thirty feet by fifteen :—were several low Cells, sufficient to strike horror in the breast of the most hardened Villain ;—the filth,—the vermin,— and a surly Jailor, made it up to the superessence of a young Bastile.—Thanks to providence we only remained here one night ;—The next day we arrived at Sarre-bruck, —a most beautiful little Town situated on a fine navigable River the Sarre ;—nine tenths of its population are protestants :—The Church is a most beautiful building ;—its beauty saved it during the revolution—This town is a principality—The Duke of Nassau Sarre-bruck has a very handsome Palace, and holds a regular court :—his revenue is derived chiefly from the numerous coal mines, and Iron foundries :— —Barges of about fifty tons burthen, carry the coal as far as Holland,—and supply all the Towns and manufactories on the Banks of the Sarre, and the Rhine : —It is very much like our welsh coal ; very cheap,—two shillings per ton at the pits :—In this delightful Town the English are great favourites ;—and I know of no place in France equal to Sarre-bruck for a residence or a travelling visit.—

"It was late in the evening of the next day before we arrived at Sarre-Libre ;—our chains and handcuffs were taken off, and marched two and two into the barracks,

which were fitted up for the prisoners:—and of the comparaison between the two dépôts:—Bitche with all its horrors, was the most preferable.— —

"Sarre-libre is in the department of the Mozelle:—a small but strongly fortified Town:—Its form is a regular square,—with pleasant walks round the ramparts;—The inhabitants do not exceed Six thousand: and german was the prevailing language.—This was a dépôt for fifteen hundred prisoners, chiefly seamen:—The rooms in which we were confined, were about twenty feet square; each containing seven beds, and fourteen people.—the provisions of the very worst quality, and short of weight;—I began to regret leaving Bitche:—there we had the satisfaction of being locked up with about Seventy persons, most part officers and gentlemen:—but here, was I, and another poor Middy, shut up with twelve coal heavers,—mates of Colliers,—such as Falconer so ably describes in his Shipwreck under the name of Rodmond;—they were for ever running down the Navee as they called it;—Their whole conversations were about—Keels of coals,—Canny lads;—and Brigs with pink sterns;— —but Captain Brenton used to stick in their gizzards, more than ever their confinement:—

"A fellow among them was one day abusing the Navy with all his heart:—(they all seemed to have a deadly hatred towards it)—'Daam that fellow Brenton;—It's a his fote. that, we Meates and Captains of Mearchant ships are no better off in This Country:—When he was axed by the government, what pay we should have:—he said, rank 'em with ma young gentlemen:—he ought to have said:—rank 'em wi ma Leeftenants!—We'll catch him down to the Nothord one day;—then let him look out:—young gentlemen indeed,—a set of dommed trash, that does not know B—from bulls foot.—

"I should not have mentioned this:—a want of education might plead for their ignorance; but, I will shew that they deserved the opprobrium of their fellow prisoners for

a piece of unequalled villainy, that was ever recorded in History :—and if any of them be now living :—I hope, they have been sitting on the stool of repentance ;—but there is an indelible stain on their memories,—that their gray hairs wetted with their tears, will never be able to blot out.

" The Commandant of this dépôt by the name of Le Sage, arrived with his family :—at his appointment :—but in such poor circumstances, that, the whole of their spare clothes, would not have made a mop for a Jolly-boat :—In the short space of twelve months :—he had a Carriage, and getting extremely rich ;—This was plundered from the poor prisoners scanty allowance :—He contracted with a Jew butcher, to supply the prisoners with meat :—but, instead of letting them have what the government allowed :—a half pound of good beef :—he used to buy up all the offals from the other Butchers, and serve this out ; short of weight to the bargain :—The clothing was also kept back :—so that our wretched but fine seamen,—remained in bed to keep out the cold.—or stalk about the ramparts like spectres wrapped up in a Blanket.—

" The Commandant exercised his power over the post office, that all suspected letters, or petitions, were carried to him :—so that no complaint could reach Paris—from Sarre Libre :—and he always took care to punish severely the writer.—

" Things were carried to such a pitch, that one of the inhabitants undertook to send a petition for them, through the means of his friend a traveller :—It arrived safe :—and instead of an answer ;—Three special Commissioners arrived from Paris, to enquire from the prisoners themselves, the extent of their grievances :—they came Incog : —but when they presented themselves at the gate,—the Gendarmes refused them admittance ; they threw open their coats, and showed the superior rank of the legion of honneur,—and ordered the gates to be opened instantly

—They went in, and first took a survey of the barracks; then proceeded to the general inquiry.

"The commandant immediately guessed who they were, and their errand;—he hastened into the prison by another gate:—he went to the rooms where the mates of Collins were, and upon his promise, of allowing them to reside in Town on their parole:—he got them to sign a document hastily drawn up:—saying; that the seamens complaint was without foundation:—that the Commandant was indulgent and kind to them:—that the provisions were excellent and good weight:—that they were a set of drunkards,—and sold their clothes for Brandy as soon as they were served out to them:—and finally, it was a piece of base ingratitude towards so good a Commandant:—Twelve of those wretched Coal heavers signed this precious document!!!—for the ruin and destruction of their fellow prisoners, and Countrymen.—

"Away went Le Sage in Triumph to the Commissioners:—on hearing what they were come for:—shewed them this rascally paper:—represented the signatures to be those of officers!! &c— —As soon as they read it, they ordered a copy to be taken,—and in a few hours they were on the road to Paris,—and no further trouble was taken about the dépôt:—Le Sage having now his sway;—found out the writer of the petition, and the spokesman;—he incarcerated them in a Cachôt on bread and water for a month, then sent them off to Bitche.—

"I am sorry that my memory will not help me with the names of those twelve scoundrels:—It is of no great consequence:—a list of them was stuck up at Lloyd's, so that no British merchant could ever think employing any of them.— —I beg, to let it be understood, that, there were some others of the same class, very worthy men.—that had no hand whatever, in this piece of Villainy:—but like every honest man, shuddered at the very sight of any—of them ever afterwards.—

"There was a seaman in the dépôt, by the name of Morgan:

a hot headed Welshman :—was in his room when the roll beat for Muster :—A Gendarme rather intoxicated,—began driving the men down :— —at the same time beating them with his sword ;—Morgan was moving down rather slowly, —received three or four hard blows :—his Welsh blood could stand it no longer :—he turned on the gendarme, wrenched his sword out of his hands,—threw it out of the window, then Kicked the fellow down stairs :—the guard was called, and poor Morgan was beat all the way to the Cachot most unmercifully :—shortly after, he was tried by a court Martial for resisting the guard,—and sentenced to be shot : which was put in execution the morning after the trial at four o'clock.— — — — —so much for French Justice.—

" In These barracks ; and opposite the room where I was confined, was a Subterraneous passage, that—communicated by a Sally-port to the ditch outside the town, and close to the River :— — —We had often observed the door of this passage, but nobody ever tried to open it.

"—It was secured by a strong bolt and Lock :—for three days, we hanged a blanket over the door ; as if to dry,—to prevent suspicion :—I and another ; one forenoon, worked under this blanket, and broke the lock—forced the bolt, and entered the passage— —it was about fifty yards long—full of mud and foul air—we found out the sally port :— — —soon forced it open then returned to change our dress and prepare for our escape.

" While we were changing our clothes, the drum beat to arms ;—Soldiers and Gendarmes were running in all directions,—In came the Commandant foaming with rage ;—made his way right up to the door ;—giving orders to proceed in with torches, and drawn swords, and kill anyone found in the—passage :— —Luckily, we were out in time ;—but here ended our hopes of escape :—the numerous spies in this dépôt, rendered it almost next to an impossibility :—I remained in this execrable depot fourteen Months,—then orders came for our return to Verdun.—

"I had been absent from This depot about three years, and of course found many alterations.—A great many new arrivals,—mostly military officers taken in Spain;—The race course was given up:—The French black legs were returned to Paris!!—The Gambling houses entirely done away with;—and finally General Wirion had blown his brains out!!—For nearly six years, he commanded the dépôt at Verdun,—and raised large sums of money, either by terrifying the rich until they made him or his wife a handsome present:—or by stopping a franc per month, out of the scanty allowance the poor officers and Masters of merchantmen were obliged to exist on:—this refined system of robbery was arrived at such an acmé, that, his rapacity knew no bounds,—and at last ended in his ruin:—the cause was this.—

"There was a gentleman by the name of Garland, (a detenue) who was rich: some say, ten thousand a year;—being very nervous from ill health—was easily frightened by Wirion into any-thing:—especially as money did not seem to be of any value to him;— —Wirion, had been on rather intimate terms with him, and had often borrowed small sums,—and received handsome presents both for himself and wife:—who by the bye, was no other than one of ladies of the Palais Royal:—he now made his grand attack:—Mr. Garland, was one morning arrested by the Gendarmes and brought up to the Citadel before General Wirion, accused of going to desert:—he produced a forged letter of information, that Justified his arrest;—and that, he must be confined in the round Tower until he gave some more substantial security, than his parole of honor:—which was, a bond of fifteen thousand pounds:—to be forfeited to General Wirion,—if ever he made the attempt:— —the bond was given with as much Joy,—as it was received by this Villain.—

"Mr. Garland was liberated, and escorted to his lodgings by the Generals Aid de camp,—who took the liberty of remaining to dinner:— — —he then presented Madame

Wirions compliments, requesting the loan of the Carriage and horses for a day or two :—It was sent with pleasure,—Coachmen and footmen in livery,—It was kept a month ! ! —Her ladyship had made a dash with it to Paris ;—when it was sent back, the Carriage was spoiled,—and the horses Jaded— —by the time it was fit to go out again :—the faithful trusty aid du Camp—appeared ;—requesting the Carriage for Madame Wirion once more :— —but Mr. Garland refused to lend it :—The storm was gathering over this persecuted gentleman,—and in the course of week, it burst over his head in all its fury.—He had proceeded a short distance in the carriage for an airing :—when, some Gendarmes—rode up full gallop and arrested him :—he was now hand cuffed, and put into the Round Tower, with orders to allow nobody whatever—to approach him : —All the horrors of the fort of Bitche, were flitting before him—he had nothing in his mind but racks,—chains,—and dungeons :— — —It was true that Mr. Garland had gone a quarter of a mile beyond the boundaries,—or limits allowed for the prisoners on parole, which is six miles round Verdun :—this was a plea for his being accused of going to desert.—It was useless for him to attempt vindicating himself ;—as the old story was brought forward,—certain information :—that he was going on to Bar le duc in his own Carriage :—then to take post for the frontiers :—the very appearance of every thing considered, carried a lie with it.—First of all :—he had—neither clothes, money,—or provisions, with him, when he was arrested.—and the most important of all ;—he had no passport.—

" On the third morning after his arrest ;—he was desired to prepare himself, to set of next morning to the Fort of Bitche :—that he would be conducted in the usual manner of all deserters :—in irons from prison to prison.—at this information—he was so horror-struck that he became really ill :— —In the night—when all villainous transactions take place :—he was surprised by a visit from

the General and his Aid-du Camp, wrapped up in their cloaks :—Wirrion, began to accuse his unhappy victim with duplicity,—but was deaf to all assurance of no intention whatever, to desert,—he then began to pity him, on account of their former friendship,—when the fort of Bitche was mentioned ;—Mr. Garland offered the General any terms he pleased to name, not to send him to that dreadful place :—This was Just what Wirion wanted !—he said, 'I do not wish to hurt you :—but you know that you have forfeited your bond ; therefore, to cut short the business ;—give me three bills of exchange at different dates, of five thousand pounds each :—and I will set you at liberty immediately ; to go to any Town beyond thirty leagues from Verdun, excepting Paris :—where you can remain safely, and quietly, on your parole,—infinitely better than at Verdun.—

"The bills were given on Messrs Lafitte and Perrigaux at Paris,—the bond was destroyed :—and Mr Garland was set at liberty,—with strong injunctions to secrecy as to what had taken place,—the next day he went in his carriage to reside at Nancy.— —The reason why Wirion preferred bills to the bond ; was,—that it appeared more like a debt of honor, whereas a bond would look otherwise, and difficult perhaps to get the money.— —Sir Thos Lavie R : N—by some means or other found out the whole transaction ;—he wrote off immediately to Messrs Lafitte and Perrigaux about the matter ;—and had their answer perfectly to his satisfaction.— —

"Wirion, to make sure of the money, sent off his trusty aid du Camp to get them discounted ;— —but the answer was, that they would not answer any bills of Mr Garlands, for more than a hundred pounds at a time :—therefore the bills were of no use :— —When the faithful Mercury returned with this information :—Wirion was for setting off for Nancy,—but he was informed by his spies, that Sir Thos Lavie was the person who dared meddle with his affairs :—he arrested Sir Thomas, and sent him off to

the Fort of Mont-Medy, and put him in solitary confinement.

"Ten days after,—orders arrived from the Minister of war, desiring Wirion to send Sir Thos Lavie—immediately to Paris with a free passport;—this came like a thunderbolt, and a death blow to Wirion and his plans;— —Off flew his aid du Camp to Montmedy, and brought back Sir Thos Lavie:—the General was polite in the extreme to him;—made humble apologies for his conduct;—and begged his friendship for the future,—Two days after, he showed him the letter from the Minister of war, as if he had Just received it,—at the same time, presented him with a passport, and detained him to breakfast.—

"Wirion was also ordered to Paris, to account for some public monies and other things—before the Minister of war;—When Sir Thos Lavie arrived at Paris—he underwent a brief examination which sealed the doom and ruin of Wirion:—his arrest was ordered:—He took a pistol and shot himself!!—When Buonaparte was informed of his death;—he said—'He ought to have done it long ago—

"Wirion was succeeded by a still more consumate Rogue;—Colonel Courcelles;—his whole character was a melange of cruelty,—cunning,—hypocrisy,—and avarice, —although, not so splendid a villain as his predecessor:—he had more art to conceal his method of extortion:-- — He had long aspired to be Governor;—and when he assumed the command;—he said,—'If my power was not limited over these rascals of Englishmen;—I would shut them all up in the dungeons of the Citadel,—and give them water from the ditch.—

"He had a coadjutor with him named Masson;—Lieutenant of the Gendarmirie,—a good meaning man enough; if he had not been led astray;— —he began his roguery in pence, and ended in pounds;—every art that could be resorted to; was done to pillage the poor prisoners—One would have thought; that Wirions example was sufficient

warning for them both ;— —but money ;—money was the devil :— —a few months after he took the command ;—A Lieutenant and two midshipmen deserted from Verdun :— —on which account, all the rest, to the number of about one hundred and forty, were shut up in the Convent of the Citadel for twelve months :—at last a petition was sent to the Minister of war, about the large sums of money that crept into the Governors pockets :—stopped from the Middies allowance, for soi-disant—repairs—in the Convent,—also, complaining of the injustice of being shut up for the fault of others :—

"The petition had the desired effect—Two commissioners arrived from Paris to make the proces—verbal ; — when Masson the Lieutenant, became so frightened, for having robbed the public money :—went under the ramparts of the Town, and shot himself !!—a very lucky affair for Mr Courcelles ; as the whole of the blame now, rested on the dead man.—yet, for all that—he was disgraced with heavy suspicions :—and glad he was to get off under such easy terms.—

"He was replaced by the Baron de Bauchêne, a most excellent and good man :—every prisoner—enjoyed security and peace,—if not comfort :—Unfortunately, he did not Command the dépôt but a few months ;—He died from the effect of some old wounds ;—regretted by all the prisoners, and by every body who knew him :—a large subscription was raised to errect a monument to his memory :—by the prisoners, but Boney would not allow it ;—so the money was given to his widow.

"The reason why the gambling house was done away with, was, that money was scarce with the prisoners ;— and no more pigeons to pluck :—very few, among all the great gamblers were fortunate.— —A certain person had general good luck ; and managed to win from the frenchmen, about ten thousand pounds altogether ;— his lawful spouse, was in Keeping at Paris by a French officer of rank.— —she paid him frequent visits for

money ;— —on one occasion, she came post from Paris, and found her lord and master at breakfast with his chere amie :— —' How do you do my dear,—said she—most cordially to each of them :—then turning to her husband, said—I'm come for some money ;—I want to pay my debts in Paris ;—also my beau's ;—I hear you have been extremely fortunate.—so let me have some,—and I'll remain with you until to morrow morning ;—How much do you want said he ?—Give me what you can spare, and I'll not trouble you again these six months :—he did so.—and she departed the next morning ;—with a most cordial bye-bye—Can I do any-thing for you in Paris ?—o-mores ! !

" A doctor Johnson—was taken prisoner at sea, on board a merchant ship ;—gave every reason to believe that he was a lunatic :—on the road, the guards were obliged to tie him down in the cart :—After his arrival at Verdun, he appeared to have changed his raving, for a settled melancholy madness :—It was not of that nature to make it necessary to confine him :—This continued for about two years ;—At last a fit came on ; and the Gendarmes took him, raving to prison ;—The next day, he appeared well again,— —and received from his banker the sum of thirty pounds in french crowns ;— —he was to have been let out of prison the next morning, but, another fit came on ;—he began making a most tremendous noise, —and threw all his money out of the window into the street, a handfull at a time,—and seemed delighted, in making such a fine scramble among the boys :— —This conduct was fully represented to the minister of war ;— —He was considered a nuisance, and ordered to be sent home to England ;—he arrived safe at home,—and was quite sound of mind ;—he having played the madman so well, and with such perseverance, that he finally succeeded in regaining his liberty.—

" Many duels took place at Verdun, some ended fatally : — —The first, was between a Mr Gould an Irish gentle-

man :—and Monsieur Balby—proprietor of the Gambling house, and grand master of the black legs from Paris.— — Mr Gould by a run of great good luck at rouge et noir,— won about Six thousand pounds !—his good fortune seemed to continue,—when one night Mr B. took it in his head to insult him.—

" It was customary at the Table, when any person said ;— so much on such a colour ;— —was as sufficient ; as if the money was laid down on the colour named :— —Gould said—A hundred louis on the red ;—sa-va said the dealer ; —He won ; but Balby refused to pay it,—from the money not being put down ;—high words arose,—at last Balby tore the lappet of Gould's coat ;—this led to a challenge,— Next morning the parties met, Just outside the Town at an Inn ;—and they fought in a dancing room ;—They were both good shots ;—Balby had the first fire,—but missed :—yet the ball passed through the collar of Goulds coat ;— —Goulds shot took away a part of the calf of Balby's leg,—he was carried to a couch where the surgeons found it a very bad wound to cure ;— —When Gould left the room, he was seized by a party of Gendarmes and sent off immediately to the Fort of Bitche :—It was nearly three months before Balby could move about on crutches ; —one morning he left Verdun in his carriage for Paris ;— in a week he returned :—passed through Verdun,—only stopping to change horses :—In a week more, he returned with Gould seated by him ;—This generous and honorable conduct, raised him high in the estimation of every body ; —he had been to the minister of war for that express purpose ;—he said he could not rest, until Gould was at liberty :—ever after, they were intimate friends.—

" The next was between Capt Alexander of the marines, and Lieut Tuckey both of His Majesty ship Calcutta ;— occasioned by some remarks made by—Capt A—on the discipline of the ship ;—the Lieut was severely wounded in the arm.

" Another was fought between Lieutenant Aprece R:N:,

and Capt Ridley of the marines,—Aprece was severely wounded.—

"Another between Lieut's Miles—and Walpole R:N about Miles's girl—he threatened to horsewhip Walpole,—this ended in a duel, and Miles was shot dead :—he was a very fine young man :—

"Again Capt Alexander, and Lieut Barker R:N—occasioned by a doctor Clark ;—This man having drank tea with an amiable English Family spread a report, that the lady of the house wanted to poison him ;—Capt Alexander was commenting on the absurdity of it, among some of his countrymen ;—knowing the doctor was sometimes not in his right senses,—When Barker came forward and desired him not to speak of it, again ; as he was the friend of the family in question ;—the insulting tone in which the reproof was given :—demanded an explanation, that ended in a duel :—and Barker was shot dead ;— — Thus ended the life of a brave—humane, and worthy man.—

"Another between Capt Penrice of the Army, and Lieutt Conran R:N, occasioned at a supper table.—a gentleman was singing a song—Conran was vice president, —Capt Penrice was talking somewhat loud ;—when Conran called-out ;—Capt Penrice :—silence for Mr Mays song ;—they only exchanged looks :—as soon as the song was over,—each withdrew with a friend ;—an explanation took place,—and they both returned to the Table :— — Capt Penrice after this ; was induced through the weighty and persuasive eloquence of a great man, to reconsider the affair, and call Conran out ;—they went out ;—it was said—merely to exchange shots by firing wide of each other :— — —they did so, but Capt Penrice's ball struck a tree,—glanced off, and killed Conran on the spot ;— —so much for Eloquence ;—

"The last fatal one that took place, was between two midshipmen ;—Messrs Morris and Scott— —the former was called out for black-balling the other at a Club,—

Scott was shot dead;—he was scarcely nineteen years of age, and the only son of an old Post Captain.—

"This year 1810, many overtures were made by the British government to Buonaparte for an exchange of prisoners;— —but all to no purpose,—and it was finally decreed; that there should be no exchange whatever, until the end of the war, which appeared to last as long as Boney lived:—here was a pretty prospect!! both for young and old!! the miserable perspective of an eternal imprisonment;—all hopes and prospects—for myself,—in my profession;—seemed to vanish.—I have often sat at my prison window:—looking through the bars at the setting sun: figuring to myself; that I saw in the clouds an Island:— or rather; the reflection of my dear native land; then it seemed like the sea and Ships;—in fact, my whole imagination was on my Country:—but when night closed in, I retired to my bed of straw, hove a sigh,—solicited the protection of heaven; then slept to renew the same thoughts on the ensuing day.—

"Well, to make the best of my ill fortune;—I turned Benedict; that is to say got married— —It was the best thing I could do to secure some portion of happiness in this world;—for heaven knows I had tasted enough of its bitterness even to the very dregs:— —so with the best little soul in the world, I made my mind up to twenty years more captivity.—

"But that unfortunate star of mine, did not chuse to abandon me even in this sublunary happiness:—I was doomed still to more troubles and adversities: equal in mind and body to any; I had yet undergone— — — — — There was a very fine River at Verdun;—The Meuse:—I was extremely fond of fly-fishing, I was out one day enjoying myself at this innocent recreation: when I was met by a person, with whom I had a very slight acquaintance;—The Honorable Henry Dillon,—Colonel on half pay;—formerly in the french Irish brigades; as paddy may say—but now, receiving the reward of those services;

from the british government!—since the Revolution:—He hated England; and if ever he served her; it was to her prejudice:— —We first accosted each other with the common place compliments—of fine weather &c— —at last, it took another lead:—He asked me, if I had not heard of a frenchman in Verdun, who was in the habit of assisting some of the prisoners to desert with false passports:—I said—I knew there was such a man;—but that I never saw him in my life:—he then said,—I was told by a Friend, that you could inform me all about him;—consequently a friend of mine wishes to see him as he is inclined to desert, rather than remain here any longer;—especially; since family affairs requires his presence in England:—'Pray who is your Friend Colonel? said I— —'Oh—said he 'that's a secret.— — —Keep it then Sir—said I— —finding he could not gain the information he wished from me:—he sat himself down on the bank and began to shed tears—I was alarmed at this, for—I could not bear to see it in an old man—Well Colonel said I—if you will confide in me, and tell what you have to say in a candid manner,—I promise you, that you shall know the man you ask for:—

"Well then said he it is for myself:—I am so much in debt both at this place and in Paris, that I am miserable: —I have been seperated from my family many years:— —I then in return promised to take him to the person in question, at nine o'clock that evening:— —we met according to appointment and I took him to the house:— —I repeat again, that I never knew the man prior to this moment,— —But the house;—and his wife had been pointed out to me only a few days before, by a friend;—It was curiosity that prompted me beyond all prudence to see this man;—and what were the arrangements he intended to make with Colonel Dillon.—

"He, for a trifle purchased among the peasants, and others;—passports that had been used, and that served for the year:—He then spread them out on a board quite

wet :—with a fine hair pencil, he took out all the writing excepting the Prefects signature—with a chymical preparation,—then filled it up, Just as it was wanted ;—and would even accompany the person and see him out of the country for twenty guineas.—

" Colonel Dillon was to go by the way of Holland under the name of Henry Delisle, retired officer ;— —every thing was concluded and settled that very evening, for the paltry sum of five Louis :—The passport was ready the next day ;—he had it,—but did not pay for it ;— — —three days had passed on and no signs of his departure ;—we knew also from experience, that it would soon be blown all over the Town ;—I went and urged him to depart or destroy the passport ;—he assured me, that he would go and pay the man, and set off next morning.— —I was satisfied with this assurance ;—But, on the following morning,—I was roused by a person,—saying that Monsieur Lambry—the Procureur Imperial requested my attendance at eight o'clock that morning in his Study,—I went there, and found the Judge ready to receive me :—He began by asking me, if I was not acquainted with a Frenchman at Verdun, by the name of Page, who lived in the rue Chausser :— —I denied all knowledge of the person so named :—and well I might for I never heard the name before :—but the street struck me immediately, and set me all of a flutter :— —' Pray then Sir—said he ;—coming to the point—' did you not, three nights ago, take a certain person there for a false passport :—and—were you not present at the whole of the transaction and making the bargain ?—I said—I did not understand what he meant— —' Well then Sir—said he ' did you not take Colonel Dillon there for a passport ?—and was he not to go by way of Rotterdam under the name of Delisle ?—I was so astonished at this that I could not reply— —' The case is this said he—' Here is the identical passport,— —I knew it immediately : but by what means he got hold of it I knew not— —' We have been long looking for this man ;

said he—and Colonel Dillon has been the means of discovering the fellow—who is now in prison;—he will be tried for it next Sessions at St Mihiel;—Colonel Dillon is to be a witness against him; and—you must be another,—that this man may be punished according to law:— —I now said—Monsieur Lambry—Of all the various incidents of my, life—this piece of treacherous villainy is beyond every thing:—Colonel Dillon was always suspected of being a spy on his unfortunate countrymen,—this instance now proves him one;—the dastardly scoundrel, who can shed tears and betray the man who befriends him;—ought to be shunned by all society:—by giving up the passport:—I see that he had two reasons;—The first,—he did not possess courage sufficient to make the attempt;—the next was he was afraid of the Fort of Bitche;—consequently he chose to make a virtue of a necessity by denouncing me,—and the man:—Then Claim the reward as a spy.—he may go as a witness—but not I;— —'Then; said he—'you must go back to Bitche for the rest of the war, and we will do without you:—but if on the other hand you will go against this said Page;—you shall have the parole of any Town in France, Paris excepted;—recollect also, that you are married, and the Fort of Bitche will not be very pleasant for a delicate young lady:— —I told him 'that my mind was made up, that my wife had wedded my good and bad fortunes; but, I was certain,—she would rather see me dead than dishonoured.—

"With that I left the house and in an hour after I was arrested;—handcuffed, and sent off to the Fort of Bitche.—

"I marched as usual through mud and rain;—visited my old prisons I had been in before;—and in eight days I arrived at Bitche, and took possession of my old berth in the souterrain.

"Very few changes had taken place in this dépôt;—things went on in the old way:—I had left my wife at

Verdun with her family, she was the only anxiety I had on my mind :— —I remained here nearly two years,— — then a great change took place in Boney's affairs :—when at last orders came for our removal from Bitche to Sedan. —During the last ten months I had been as comfortable as at Verdun ;—The Commandant was kind enough, to give me two furnished rooms in the Fort, and permitted my wife to be with me, and permission very frequently to go into Town for a walk.—

" It was now about the latter end of the year 1813, that disasters one after the other followed Boney wherever he went :—his troops that escaped from the sword of the enemy,—were swept away by thousands, from a sickness that resembled a plague.—

" We were six days going to Sedan ;—every fortified Town on the road was getting a stock of provisions in case of a seige.

" On our arrival at Sedan, we found every thing in great confusion owing to the Allied armies having passed the Rhine, and had entered the sacred territory of France in all directions, and sans-ceremonie :—The Commandant of the Town was the Baron de Wasronville,—whose kindness to the prisoners and myself in particular, will be for ever uppermost in my thoughts,—and with grateful rememberance.—

" My wife was very near her confinement,—when orders arrived to remove the prisoners to Amiens ;—In this dreadful dilemma,—I went to the Baron Wasronville,— and stated my situation, and begged in the name of humanity to allow me to remain as my wife expected her accouchement every hour ;—and that, if we were obliged to move off with the rest of the prisoners, she must only expect to perish on the road.—

" He desired me to go into Town and get lodgings ;—saying at the same time—' Keep within doors, do not go out but in cases of necessity, and you may remain until your good lady is recovered ; then you shall proceed by yourselves to

your dépôt :—This was really a most unexpected kindness, —But he was a Pole ! !— —I went into town, and by the help of a friend whom my wife knew at Verdun, we procured comfortable lodgings :— —In the evening my wife was safely delivered of a fine girl.—We were extremely poor ;—not above three crowns in our possession, and where to get any more we could not tell ; all the Banks were shut ;—people were burying their valuables in their cellars, and gardens.—

" The Cossacks were in constant motion, and they had been seen not far from Sedan,—This news struck fear to the Bourgois ; and trembling to the females :— —It was the severest winter known for many years ; the Thermometer, was frequently twenty degrees below zero— — so, that had we proceeded to Amiens with the prisoners ; both my wife and child must have perished with cold.— —

" In this Town, I witnessed all the horrors attending the retreat of a beaten army :—here it was felt with the bitter recollection of their former glory :— —A dreadful mortality prevailed among the french soldiers :—every day, for more than a month, waggons full of poor wretches were brought to the hospital :— —It was not only at Sedan that this calamity prevailed ;—but it was in every Town, within a hundred leagues along the whole extent of the banks of the Rhine :—At Metz, the black flag was hoisted on the Church Steeples :—The waggons used to hold twenty Sick soldiers :— — —in taking them out into the—hospital, five or six were—generally found dead :—and seldom less than three :—every morning, forty or fifty bodies were thrown into a pit, and covered with quick lime :—It was a plague—or contagion, that spread unfortunately among the inhabitants :—and at Charleville, it swept away many families :—The markets were abandoned :—not a shop to be seen : and Trade entirely at a stand :—fear and anxiety was painted on every countenance :—Each courrier brought fresh news of the enemy, and of their near approach :— —At last, the

Town was in great consternation :—The Cossacks had surprised the Town of Carrignau,—only nine miles off, and had taken Seven hundred Polish Lancers who were there to guard it prisoners, with all their horses and baggage :—five hundred Cossacks only ; performed this exploit :—By a forced march they reached the neighbourhood about two in the morning :—they met a peasant on the road, who they forced to be their guide, and threatened him with death if he did not conduct them to the gates of the Town ;—a hundred of them dismounted—about a quarter of a mile from the Town, and proceeded on to the Gates, with the utmost caution ;—The peasant went first with two Cossacks ;—all the rest lied down about twenty paces off :—on knocking, the Centinel called out 'qui vive ?—the parole was given by the peasant,—the wicket was opened and in they went, the Two Cossacks dispatched the Centinal and peasant also ;—The Trumpter ran out to sound the alarm—was killed ;— —All the Cossacks entered the Town, with the greatest silence—went to the Barracks and took Seven hundred Lancers in their beds, with their horses already saddled ; they loaded a waggon with the arms :—and in less than a half an hour were all out of the Town :—This daring exploit kept every body in Sedan on the Alert ;—The picquets were drove in—in every direction ;—the noise of cannon was heard distinctly within the line of Sedan towards Paris.— —

" Three weeks had elapsed since my wife's confinement, when I received orders to depart for Amiens that night ;—I ran to the Commandant,—and begged him to allow me to stop one week more ; as both my wife and child could never undertake the Journey ;—the weather was colder than ever—(January 1814)—He said—I can do nothing more for you ;—In fact, I have got myself already into a scrape by allowing you to remain ;—I am only Commandant of the Fort ;—The General of the Division has said, that I protect, and encourage the enemies of France. —so depart you must,—go and get yourself ready :—Well

Sir—said I—your kindness towards me shall never be forgotten, I thank you with gratitude for what you have already done for me :—but only consider my situation, and you will not blame me for endeavouring to remain a short time longer :—another thing, I have not a farthing to commence my Journey :—we have had no pay these two months ;—What in God's name am I do do ?— —

" ' This is certainly a trying case said he :—There is no money in the military chest :—what can I do for you ?—I have but little of my own :— —He went into the next room,—returned with twelve crowns which he put into my hand ;—saying ;—' pay me this when we meet again ;—or else, seek to help a sufferer like yourself in the same manner.—I was so struck with this noble generosity,—that I could only shake him by the hand, let fall a tear of gratitude on it ; instead of thanks ; which was out of my power to utter :—The Noble Pole ! ! bade me bon voyage, —and I returned to my lodgings to prepare for my departure :— —I sold some plate that I had for two shillings and sixpence per ounce ; which raised me twelve crowns more.—

" The Allied army were now on their road to Paris ;—The Cossacks had been seen reconnoitring round the Town of Sedan ;— — — —It was about nine o'clock in the evening—and a hard frost in the begining of February 1814— —It was a most bitter cold night ;—The Gendarmes came for me to take me away :—I had hired a small covered cart, to take my wife and babe to a Village a little beyond Charleville :—In it, I placed—a bed ; blankets—and stone bottles of hot water to keep them warm :—The driver I knew I could trust :—therefore I desired him to get on as fast as he could, that they might have some rest by the time I arrived :— —

" It was a bright moon light :—the snow on the road was hard and slippery, such as the french call verglas ;—the Gendarmes were four in number but, the sirjeant who was afraid of losing me on the road :—tied me by one hand

to the ring in his saddle— —About midnight :—we had passed Mezieres and Charleville :—and not far from the village, where I desired the Cart to stop for me :—The conversation on the road was all about the enemy, especially the Cossacks :—that they were a despicable set of cowardly robbers ;—that one french soldier would beat any ten of them ;—we were near a road that turned off towards Rocroy :—all of a sudden, we saw four horsemen ! !— —at the first sight of them, we took them for the Polish Lancers who were out on picquet ;—but, the hourra they set up, let us know they were Cossacks :— —the brave Gendarmes did not like to wait their coming alongside ;—but about-Ship and set out as hard as the could go :— —I, not liking to be towed at the rate of nine knots, at the risk of my neck, especially seeing deliverance at hand :— —I caught hold of the bridle, and stopped the horse so suddenly ;—at the same time giving a good pull at the sirjeants big cloak, that he came off his seat, and measured his length on the ground ;—one of the Cossacks pulled up close to us ;—alarmed at his dreadful lance :— —I called out—Englander—' Gendarme—pointing to my brave serjeant—the Cossack understood well what I said ;—he made me mount ;— —and take the Gendarmes place ; who was now begging my protection that they would not kill him :—the Cossack made take his Cloak, reserving the sword, Carbine, and pistols for himself.— —I now took my Gentleman in Tow ;—and arrived at the Village Just before us, where I found the Cart had arrived, but detained by the Cossacks :—on my arrival I found my wife by a snug fire :— —This was the head quarters of fifteen hundred Cossacks ;—The Commander spoke a little German, and was delighted in being the means of setting me at liberty :—He informed us that all the way to Brussels was full of the Allied troops,—and that I might travel in safety,—hearing this, I retired to rest for the night ;— —The next morning I found that the other three Gendarmes were below in stable ;—I went to see them,

and praised their bravery ;— —They begged in the most abject manner for my protection ;—I told them, that they had been my most affectionate friends these ten years ;— —I wished them good bye—with their own favourite saying, when they used to be clapping—the darbies on our wrists :—C'est la fortune de guerre mon ami :—

" After Breakfast I set out towards Mons, in a comfortable covered Car on springs ;—with a heart overflowing with Joy at my being at liberty ;—It was strange beyond every thing, to be travelling in a chaise, without a Gendarme trotting alongside of it :— —not a soul was to be seen on the road for fear of the Cossacks ;—In the evening we arrived at Chimay ;—where there were about three thousand Cossacks under the Command of their Hetman Prince Platoff :—there were a great many more :— but they were out in different directions clearing the roads for the passage of the Allied army—

" The surprizing courage of the Cossacks ; and their rapid movements kept every Town and village in continual alarm and terror ;—An instance of daring courage and great presence of mind,—I will describe ;—I saw the very man, who this extraordinary feat of arms :—This single Cossack, was sent during the night as an estaffette from one division to another, but, a fog coming on, he unfortunately missed his road :—In the morning it cleared up ; when to his astonishment, he found himself close to the Town of Rocroy, a strong fortified place, and in a state preparatory to a siege ;—On his right was a wood, on his left a small river.— —within a half a mile of the Town the road winded off in a kind of semicircular direction towards Philipville :—he was obliged to proceed by this road : Just at the turn, he saw three Gendarmes coming out of Rocroy towards him ;—retreat was impossible—therefore, he very deliberately prepared to meet them :— —They came on him at full trot :—his faithful Carbine was ready : —he made sure of the foremost, and shot him dead :—the

next one he killed with his lance:—the other, fired his pistol but missed:—the Cossack unhorsed him, and took him prisoner:—Thus, he rode along in Triumph under the walls of Rocroy;—where many of the inhabitants were witnesses of the whole affair;—no one dared to follow him;—but he was complimented by some cannon shot from the Ramparts,—which was to him,—a kind salute for his bravery.—

"— — On our road to Chimay, we dined at Charlemont,—where the Landlady of the Inn told us a laughable story:—'You must know Sir—said she—'That three days ago—I had a very large company to dinner—Thirty Gendarmes, and twenty—*Rat-de-Caves*, excisemen:— — they were all come in from different districts, on account of the enemy, and were going to Rocroy as a place of security:—They were all in such high spirits;—boasting that they would beat two hundred Cossacks if they could meet them;—especially the Sirjeant Major, who said he would take any five of them to himself:—Just as the Supervisor was in the act of mixing the salad, a peasant came in and said; that the Cossacks were at Philipville, and were coming on to this place full gallop:—In an instant all was confusion;—some made their exit by the fore and back doors.—some by the windows, all crowding to the Stables;—The Gendarmes were first mounted:—the Excisemen had to saddle their horses;—away they set off pell mell towards Rocroy,—leaving our poor village exposed to the enemy;—The excisemen, were soon after the Gendarmes,—Calling on them to stop, that they might protect each other:—but, the Gendarmes mistaking their voices for the hourra of the Cossacks, spurred on at a devil of a rate,—thus; they chaced each other to the gates of the Town, nor did they think themselves safe until they were admitted inside:—The result was; Three Cossacks only, entered the Town the same evening;—and the dinner not paid for which amounted to Six louis:—

"When Marshal Macdonald—was retreating—after the

defeat he met with in Holland,—by Generals Graham and Bulow;—he halted with his army about Seven thousand men at Mons:— —the Cossacks continually harrassed his rear;—twelve hundred of them were waiting anxiously at one of the Gates of the Town, the commencement of the French retreating by the other, a single Cossack, more impatient than the rest, rode into the Town,— —crossed the square where the French troops were drawn up;—proceeded to a Blacksmiths shop, and made the man shoe his horse:—he stood smoaking his pipe, as The troops marched past him.—This piece of effrontery was beyond every thing ever before heard of;—It was a wonder they did not kill him,—or at least take him away as a prisoner! —There he stood, the picture of downright audacity:—as soon as his horse was shod;—he Joined his companions,—galloped through the Town, and brought back with them a hundred and Sixty of the rear guard as prisoners,—that same evening.—

"The Cossacks are a most extraordinary race of people;—very uncouth and barbarous in their appearance and manners;—they are highly disciplined;—all difficulties are overcome by their perseverance; whatever they undertake, they seldom fail to accomplish;—when mounted, they look like a set of banditti:—dresses of all shapes and colours:—on entering a Town, their first care is their horses, which they prize beyond all others:—and well they may:— —for they are the most surprizing little animals in the universe;—the largest of them not more than thirteen hands high;—something like our new forest ponies,—but with larger heads.—In fact, both master and horse, are pretty near alike in point of beauty,—A Cossack dismounted,—is awkward in his gait,—slow in his motions, and universally bow-legged:—His stature short and square, but of great muscular strength;—his lance from twelve to fifteen feet long;—his carbine Short and light:— —his sword, much curved, well tempered, and as sharp as a razor:—his pistols finely ornamented;—his Knout, which is a whip

made of a single thong of hide, with an iron bead on the end of it, instead of a lash :—which he exercises without mercy, both on man and beast, is his full equipment,—he takes the field :—holds death in contempt, and thinks of nothing but fighting and plunder.—On entering the house where he is billeted ;—his first demand, is—a tumbler of snaps,—Brandy,—which if not forthcoming, he flourishes his magical wand the Knout, and makes it speak all Languages ;—He then examines the linen press ;—takes a shirt,—stockings, and a handkerchief, from it, and changes before all hands :—leaving the dirty ones in lieu ;—he next orders his dinner, it must be roast meat, or fowl ;—but his favourite dish, is a Capon—stuffed with a head of Garlic and sausages ;—Then boiled in Brandy ; ! !— —' Oh Doctor Kitchener—had you known this epicurian dish ;—the very recipé would have immortalised your name for ever; and handed it down—to posterity ;—as being the ultimatum of refined cookery.—As for poor Mrs Glasse ! she would have died broken hearted, that another should have known this savoury dish—but herself.— —

" The Cossacks are great gluttons,—and greater drunkards ;— —Although scarce able to stand, when once mounted, they seldom fail in their duty :—they are very fond of fine clothes ; never mind of what colour or fashion ; —the texture was every thing ;—Joseph's coat of many colours, would have had the same chance of choice,—as the one made by Stultz—the dandy Taylor ;—so, if they see a coat they like better than their own ;—the exchange must be made ;—or his Knout the language master, explains itself most powerfully ;—some of them appear like Hamlets—grave-digger when taking off their coats ;— generally four or five ; one over the other according to size :— —I saw a regiment of them at Mons, ready to march off ;—such a motley crew !—They looked like a gang of robbers ;—at the head of this regiment—was a fellow with a big drum ;— —Stolen :—(captured goods I mean) no doubt ; and such beautiful ears for music !—The officer

gave the word :—March :—the advanced company struck up a song,—at the Chorus all hands Joined in with the big drum.—

" Every body was stopped on the road to be examined ; —they invariably asked,—how much further to Paris :— — such were the Cossacks I met with in the netherlands :— but, since that time, I saw some with Prince Platoff,—quite a different race of men ;—a noble soldier-like appearance and regularly uniformed.—

" There were also some Tartar Cossacks ;—all the way from the Crimea—better mounted, but not such good enterprizing soldiers :—They were Ugly beyond every thing :— —Broad low foreheads :—small round black eyes like the Chinese :—high cheek bones, large mouths,— black teeth,—pug noses,—small chins,—and a beautiful copper complexion :—From their being armed with bows and arrows ;—the French ladies called them les Cupidons du Nord ;— —' Bless their ugly faces for setting me at liberty.—

" At Mons, General Bulow gave me a passport,—with an order for a post chaise, and to be supplied with an officers Table and appartments, at any Inn I might chose to stop at on my road, as far as Flushing :—I objected at first about the table being supplied ;—but I was over-ruled by his saying, it was a regulation made by the French authorities themselves, and that I might as well enjoy the privilege as others.—

" He asked me what rank he should say I was in my passport :—I told him—A Midshipman :—Midshipman said he !—' What rank is that ?—like your sous-lieutenants or Ensigns, said I.— —Suppose I say you are a Colonel ; said he ;—you will have greater attention paid you, and fare all the better :— —I said :—If he pleased he might make me a General :—however, I was made a Captain in my passport, and as such entitled to a good allowance on the road,—he gave me a few letters to put

into the post in London—which made it appear that I was the bearer of dispatches;—So much the better for a Carriage and good horses—all the way.—

"Before I leave the Continent; I cannot possibly omit an anecdote that ought to be known as a base piece of ingratitude:—

"During the war a French General (Simon) then a prisoner of war in England, for some urgent reason had been ordered into solitary confinement;—as a matter of reprisal;—the same treatment was observed to one of our General Officers then a prisoner of war at Verdun,—who was incarcerated within the Convent at St Vannes;— — With a threat;—that whatever befel General Simon in England—would be retaliated on him;— —He did not bear this rigourous treatment with the philosophy of a high mind—but, complained of his detention with bitter anguish.—Among the prisoners who sometimes partook of his hospitality;—was a Midshipman by the name of Whitefield,—(afterwards a Lieutenant for his gallant conduct at Algiers—and since dead)—This gentleman, with the undeliberating frankness of his profession, offered to seize on the two Centinels who guarded the Convent door:—he being a man of lofty stature, and amazing powerful strength:—and by that means, facilitate the Generals escape:— —but whether he anticipated his release:—or whether his nerves could not be worked up for exertion;—Mr Whitefields generous devotedness was politely declined, with a profusion of promises of future patronage;—On the Entrance of the Allies into Paris, in the year 1814, —many English prisoners met there on their way to England:—Mr Whitefield was there among others, who happened to be in a state of temporary embarrassment,—and very natural; as all the Banks were closed owing to the presence of two hundred thousand bayonnets;—Mr Whitefield applied to the General for a small supply to help him home:—To whom could he have addressed himself—with more certainty of success,

than to the man for whom he had with a loyalty unprecedented offered to risk his life;—with a Certainty of falling a sacrifice to his romantic generosity;—This great man with a hauteur of mind not well poised;—offered his noble champion a Crown piece!—which was instantly rejected with contempt and with that independence;—which ever accompanies a generous and feeling heart, capable of high deeds of valour and of honor.—

"I travelled post all the way from Brussels to Flushing;—from thence, I crossed over to Harwich, and Landed in Old England after an Absence of nearly ten years:—thus; the best of my life from Sixteen to Six and twenty were past as a prisoner of war.— —'Alls well that ends well—"

WITH CAPTAIN BRENTON AND HIS MEN

THESE are some of the experiences of one of the most distinguished of the British Naval Captains taken by Napoleon—some ten in all fell into the enemy's hands throughout the war—Captain Sir Jahleel Brenton. He was captured, together with his ship's company, off Cherbourg on July 2, 1803, in consequence of his frigate, the *Minerve*, stranding in a dense fog on one of the great cones of stone sunk at the entrance to the roadstead as part of the foundations of Cherbourg breakwater. Captain Brenton and his men made a gallant and stubborn defence, keeping up a fierce fight for ten hours against the cliff batteries and a swarm of gunboats which assailed them at close quarters, but the wind falling to a dead calm made it impossible to save the ship. The survivors of the fight had to surrender, and were taken on shore as prisoners.

Epinal in the Vosges, a six-hundred miles march away, was named as the place of their detention.

To raise money for their living expenses on the long journey—there being nobody at Cherbourg willing to discount bills on their London agents—the officers had to pawn or sell what private valuables they had saved and carried on their persons. Captain Brenton himself offered his gold watch in pledge to a merchant from l'Orient, whom he met by chance in Cherbourg. He was dealt with in the result, he relates, most generously; the Frenchman in the end refusing to take the watch and accepting instead the Captain's note of hand for twenty-five guineas, more than the sum first asked. His conscience, declared

the worthy merchant, would not let him keep the watch.

The *Minerve's* prisoners set off from Cherbourg for Epinal a week after landing, starting in two detachments. The sailors and marines went off first, on July 8, in a column of some four hundred men, guarded by cavalry and infantry. Captain Brenton and the officers followed next day by themselves, in charge of three gendarmes. "They treated us," says the Captain, "with respect. We received notice of where we were to make our next halts, and were allowed to walk in parties as we liked. We started," he adds, "in high spirits, expecting that our detention would be short; the younger officers looking on it as an adventure, and hoping to see interesting things."

All went smoothly at the outset. At St. Lô, the first town of any size they came to, they found the officer in command of the district, a General Delagorge, a kindly and courteous gentleman. He had, it turned out, received hospitality from British officers when a prisoner during Sir Ralph Abercrombie's campaign in Egypt, and was eager to make return. "He invited me to dine with him," says Captain Brenton, "and to bring my First Lieutenant. We had an elegant little repast, and every possible attention was shown us." When the British party resumed their march next day, the General saw them off, and wished them a speedy release from captivity. "The General," remarks Brenton, "kissed me at parting, to the high amusement of the officers and midshipmen." Most of the officers while at St. Lô were billeted in the houses of the principal inhabitants, who went out of their way to show them every kindness. On their arrival, indeed, the officers, on going to their billets, found a hearty supper awaiting them, and in many of the houses friends of the family came in during the evening to assist in entertaining the guest of the occasion. During the two days that Captain Brenton and his officers remained at St. Lô the same generous hospitality in the form of good dinners

and suppers was shown them, and on their departure at sunrise on the third morning, an excellent breakfast was placed before them to speed them pleasantly on their way. "Nor could these worthy people," records Captain Brenton to their credit, "be prevailed upon to receive any indemnification for the trouble and expense they had incurred."

Things changed for the worse during the next stage. A squad of cavalry now joined the gendarmes, the Lieutenant in charge of which proved a surly, cross-grained individual. He refused to allow any marching at ease; he forbade them walking in groups, or talking. The dragoon officer made Brenton and the rest form up in ranks and keep together, not speaking a word as they tramped along. The dragoons brought with them a number of merchantship prisoners from Brest and elsewhere, who had been landed by privateers. These were joined on to the *Minerve's* officers in one column, all being compelled to push forward as fast as they could walk, regardless of the sufferings of many from lameness and sore feet.

At Caen, where a twenty-four hours' halt was made, Captain Brenton met with a personally unpleasant experience. The French General in command there was a rough, bad-tempered brute. He had the prisoners placed under close restraint, and treated them so harshly that Brenton had to call on him and indignantly expostulate. They were officers on parole and entitled to decent consideration, he protested. The reply was a coarse rebuff. "Je me moque de votre parole d'honneur. Je ne sais pas que, c'est moi!" retorted the ill-conditioned boor with a sneer. Captain Brenton kept his temper, and quietly answered: "I will tell you, sir; it is for a British officer stronger than any of your French prisons!" The General winced under the rebuke, and then broke out afresh. He stormed and threatened to take away the officers' parole and treat them as ordinary prisoners. But to that length he did not venture to go, no doubt thinking better of it

for his own sake if a complaint should be lodged against him. He continued though his rigorous treatment of the officers until they had left Caen.

They felt the General's hand, indeed, after that, during the time that they were passing through his district. On the night after they left Caen, at their next halting-place, they were all crowded into one room and shut up together to eat and sleep there, sentries being posted at the door of the room. In reply to Captain Brenton's outspoken complaint the officer in charge of the escort showed him his orders from the General. In them the officer was directed "to guard the prisoners with the utmost severity and vigilance, and grant no indulgences." In the end the French Captain consented to modify the instructions on his own responsibility, Captain Brenton, for his part, undertaking to be personally answerable for the behaviour of the men at the halting-places. On that understanding the French officer agreed to permit the prisoners to be decently billeted, and relaxed certain harsh measures he had been directed to take towards them while on the march.

Three days after leaving Caen financial help for their immediate needs reached Brenton in a substantial form. At St. Lô, having learned that the Paris banking house of Perrégaux Frères had considerable dealings with England, he had written to them, asking for a confidential agent to be sent to meet him on his journey, in order to receive bills of exchange which he and his officers wished to draw upon their bankers in England. He suggested that when the bills had been negotiated the money might be sent to await them at Epinal. At three marches distance from Caen, Captain Brenton received the Perrégaux's reply; in a practical form that he had hardly anticipated. "We were just seated at St. Dennis," says the Captain, "when a gentleman from M. Perrégaux was announced, who brought me three hundred louis in gold and a letter of credit for four hundred more on M. Doublat at Epinal,

with an assurance that any bills endorsed by me should be immediately honoured. This conduct was truly noble and a high compliment to the British Navy."

The officers were as usual all dining together, and the announcement of the message by Captain Brenton was received with cheers. Some of the junior officers and midshipmen, we are told, at once shouted out that they would have carriages for the rest of the way. "I shan't walk any more!" exclaimed one. "I'm going to have a carriage, and drive myself," called out another. All the conveyances in the place were taken up next day. But the carriages turned out not to be of much use. They had to be abandoned before very long. As a matter of discipline all had to keep together while on the road; none could, of course, be allowed to travel faster than at the marching pace of the military escort, three miles an hour. That slow progress soon tired the occupants of the carriages, who turned out and continued to trudge along on foot as before.

The carriages after that were sent forward to the convoy of sailors in advance, and turned to account for carrying sick and footsore men—as many as could be crowded into them. The seamen's convoy was in charge of mounted gendarmes, who relentlessly forced the poor fellows to keep pressing on. The gendarmes would not, or could not, take in that seamen were not used to long and fast marching on shore, and the pace they kept up told cruelly on the ill-shod prisoners. Their feet soon got blistered, the boots of most of them gave out, and no others to replace them were to be procured. The greater number of the men as a fact had to get along as best they could bare-footed. Many, indeed, broke down altogether, and had to be left in hospital in towns the convoy passed through.

The seamen prisoners also were otherwise abominably badly used, particularly in regard to the accommodation provided for them. In the towns, when halting for the night, the sailors were for the most part crowded into the

local gaols, which were foul and filthy dens, reeking with damp, often with swampy mud floors and water running down the walls, and almost unbearable on account of the horrible stench. It was no unusual occurrence at that time for British prisoners of war to find themselves forced to herd with French criminals whom they found locked up in the gaols: vagabonds and thieves, and others condemned to penal servitude; often, as well, with wretched conscripts, draggle-tail country lads retaken after having run away while being marched to join the colours, or with soldiers awaiting trial for desertion. Along the road, indeed, they sometimes passed gangs of recalcitrant conscripts, marching chained together like so many convicts, being so conveyed after recapture to their regimental headquarters.

Epinal was reached on December 17, and there for a time the prisoners remained.

At Epinal, Captain Brenton and his officers rejoined the *Minerve*'s seamen, the ship's company, who had been kept one day's march ahead of the officers all the time. "Several," records the Captain, "were in hospital, all were in rags, and starving from bad food and short rations."

It was found possible, fortunately, to do something for the poor fellows, and Captain Brenton at once set to work energetically on their behalf. There were a few families of English *détenus* at Epinal, among whom Brenton was able to raise a subscription for the prisoners, which provided extra clothing for the most ragged. For bedding, on finding that insufficient provision had been made by the French authorities, the Captain, with what money he had in hand, and obtained through his letter of credit on M. Doublat, the Epinal banker, bought up a quantity of old tapestry, plunder from neighbouring châteaux during the Revolution, which he served out among the men. During the three months that the prisoners were kept at Epinal, Captain Brenton, in addition, managed to

get leave for a number of his men to do work for some of the townspeople, which brought in extra money for sustenance. Those who had trades, such as carpentering, or could do plumber's and mason's work, found, we are told, plenty of occupation.

"Their conduct in general," remarks Captain Brenton, "was such as to procure them the respect of the inhabitants. Some of them remarked to me that their town had, in the previous war, been made a general depôt for prisoners; that they had had Austrians, Poles, Russians, and, in short, men of all nations in Europe confined there; and that the consequence was that the whole district was infested by beggars; but, although the British seamen were evidently worse off than any who had preceded them, there was no instance of any of them being seen begging. Another circumstance, very creditable to the British sailor, was that the inhabitants of Epinal were anxious to get the prisoners to do labouring work for them."

They were, though, only employed on work for private individuals. Officers of the garrison, it is stated, tried repeatedly to induce the men to labour on the fortifications and assist in other Government work, so as to set free some of the soldiers for army service elsewhere, but Captain Brenton set his face against the proposal, and the men themselves one and all refused. To their refusal, we are told by the Captain, "they invariably adhered, in spite of threats and coercion."

In general, it would seem, the prisoners got on amicably with the people of the place. They were very orderly as a rule, as has been said, the occasional outbreaks of rowdiness on the part of a few individuals being entirely due to the grog-shops where spirits were always cheap. Fisticuffs, or a free fight with chairs and water-bottles, was the usual shape that the affrays took; the commonest cause of trouble being jeering remarks and insolences by other customers at the *cabarets*, although now and then our men were the aggressors. The outcome was the appearance

on the scene of a picket of soldiers from the guard to separate the combatants and march the leaders away to the lock-up for a week or ten days' detention in cells on black bread and *soup maigre*, with, after that, temporary deprivation of leave to walk about the streets.

The officers were permitted to live comfortably in lodgings in the town. They established a regular mess which was held at the principal inn of Epinal. An excellent dinner and supper, including wine, was supplied, we are told, at the small monthly charge of fifty francs each officer—less than eighteen pence a day. Most of them were fairly content with their lot, at least at the first. All buoyed themselves with the prospect of being exchanged before long, having heard that the British Government had made a proposal for a general exchange of prisoners. Before they left Epinal, however, they knew that the negotiations had fallen through owing to Napoleon's refusal to treat on fair terms.

Captain Brenton had his midshipmen boarded with people of good reputation, and he also arranged for them to be regularly given lessons by capable masters in order to improve their general education. "My first care," he says, "was to have the young people who had been placed under my particular charge put *en pension* with respectable French families, where they might have the advantage of regular hours, and be enabled to learn the language with greater facility, instead of living together where nothing but English would have been spoken, and much of their time passed in idleness. The early hours of the French families greatly contributed to the health and comfort of those entrusted to their care, whilst the very moderate terms paid for their board and lodging, as well as for their instruction, enabled them to obtain great advantages at a very low price. In fact, the misfortune of having fallen into the enemy's hand bid fair to be of the most essential benefit to some who had been sent to sea very little advanced in education."

In the middle of November sudden orders came for all the British prisoners at Epinal to be moved on to the fortress of Phalsbourg, beyond Strasburg. It meant a rough and toilsome journey for several days over the hilly roads of the Vosges, little better in places than bridle tracks. The tramp at that inclement season of the year in the bitter weather that prevailed—cold winds with drenching rain and sleet—nearly killed many of the men.

The officers this time were sent off first—starting early one morning together with fifty warrant and petty officers and older seamen, and making up in all a convoy of a hundred people. The sailors, who numbered between three and four hundred, followed a few hours later. They had, we are told, to submit to savage ill-treatment by the mounted gendarmes in charge of them, being, as before while on the march to Epinal, compelled to keep on walking as fast as they could get over the ground. All who lagged behind were mercilessly urged forward, being beaten with blows with the flat of the gendarmes' swords, or pricked with the point.

The accommodation by the way, too, was of the poorest, the most desolate possible. "At one place," describes Captain Brenton, "the men were shut in for the night in a roofless, ruined chapel; a little straw was thrown in on the broken pavement, which was soon soaked by the rain. Each man had his three sous, but the only food procurable was bad liquor and some boiled liver, sold by the inhabitants at the gate; that and their ration bread." After that experience Captain Brenton took action on his own account. He persuaded the senior officer of the escort to hand over to him the men's allowances of three sous, and on approaching the next place for a night's halt one of the gendarmes was sent forward with money to buy meat and other provisions, and get them cooked ready for the men on their arrival. The plan answered satisfactorily. Throughout the journey, as we are told by the Captain, the sailors "behaved so well that at Sarrebourg

they were allowed to be billeted in small parties, each drawing their own rations and the people where they lodged cooking them for them."

They reached Phalsbourg, "shoeless and nearly naked," to find that there were no supplies in the storehouses of the small garrison available for their use. Fortunately M. Parmentier, the Mayor, was a kind-hearted Alsatian, and taking pity on the plight of the men allowed as many as room could be found for to be taken into hospital, where at least they got decent beds and nourishing food. "To supply the place of shoes," relates Captain Brenton, "a number of sabots, or wooden shoes, in value about three pence a pair, were sent in; but it was not till stern necessity rendered it necessary that the sailors could be induced to put them on. One, actually with tears in his eyes, exclaimed with an expletive, 'Who would have thought that I should have come to this!'—so inseparable was the association between slavery and wooden shoes in his mind." For clothing, Captain Brenton had to purchase some discarded army blankets, worn out and threadbare, "which had been used by the Army of the Meuse." They were found flung aside in one of the store-sheds, as they had been lying by since the campaigns of the Revolution. The sailors used some for bedding and cut others up into coats and trousers, which served as a makeshift, and helped at least to keep out the worst of the cold.

Funds came to hand later on; a grant in cash of £2,000 arrived from the British Government, having been forwarded through Paris. Captain Brenton had written to the Admiralty immediately after his capture, stating the distressed condition of his men, and asking for money to be sent him as a matter of urgency. Before, however, the money could be used to fit out the men properly at Phalsbourg, they were peremptorily hurried on elsewhere. Captain Brenton and his fellow-prisoners were ordered to proceed forthwith to Verdun, seventy miles away. Only the sick might remain behind.

They left Phalsbourg in three divisions, marching on three successive days. Some fifty officers of the *Minerve*, together with the merchantship skippers and mates, and a hundred seamen, went as the first convoy. Luneville was the first stopping-place, reached by roundabout cross-roads at the end of the first day. Snow was lying deep on the ground, and the weather was very stormy. They arrived late in the evening after a terrible journey, having been as usual forced along as fast as they could go, to find that all were to be shut up for the night in the common prison of the town. So exhausted from the biting cold and exposure were the ill-clad seamen that, as Captain Brenton puts it, "several of them could not have survived the night." Providentially they were enabled to avoid the prison.

By a mere chance as they marched in the Captain had had his attention drawn to a large empty house, marked "To let," which was standing in the main street. The sight of the place gave him an idea, and he hastened to see the Mayor. That functionary was talked round, and Captain Brenton obtained leave to hire the house from the municipality for the night for fifty francs, it being arranged that the French escort of gendarmes should be quartered there also. The whole of the hundred and fifty prisoners were crammed into the building, being told off so many men to each room. Fuel was quickly bought, and big fires were lighted in every room, while also straw for bedding was procured, and hot soup and cooked meat ordered from the restaurants of the town, sufficient for the entire party. "The delight of the men at the unexpected comfort and luxury," describes Brenton, "was unbounded." A regular watch, he adds, was kept in each room all night, to see to the fires and prevent accidents. It proved a highly satisfactory experiment. Reinvigorated by a real night's rest and good food, all were fresh and fit in the morning to resume their march over the next stage of their journey. But that is not quite

all. Their shipmates following in the rear were not forgotten. Before leaving the place Captain Brenton rented the house for the next two nights, and left sufficient money with the authorities to provide fuel for fires and a hearty meal on the arrival of the two convoys behind.

Verdun was reached on December 17, and there the *Minerve's* company were permanently divided. The officers, it was announced, were to remain at Verdun, and the sailors to proceed to Givet, their appointed prison-depôt. A ten days' halt, however, was allowed the sailors, in consideration of the privations they had undergone on the march—an interval that Captain Brenton made use of to clothe the men properly against the wintry weather by means of the money from England which he had received just before he quitted Phalsbourg.

The decision to keep back the officers permanently and send the men to live at Givet unaccompanied by a single superior to befriend them, was a brutal and harsh measure, and it had the most unfortunate consequences from the beginning. Deprived of the moral support and restraining influence of their official guardians, and callously ill-used by the gendarmes in charge during the six days' march, as before lodged at night in the gaols of the places where they halted, cheated of their rations till they were almost starving, the poor sailors cast off all thoughts of discipline. They let themselves go, selling their warm clothing and blankets as they went along to get drink, and eventually arriving at Givet in a state of hopeless destitution. To make the situation worse for the unfortunate men they found that the barracks at Givet were not ready for them, with the result that they had to pass several weeks of utter wretchedness penned in the dungeons of the fortress of Charlemont, in the neighbourhood of Givet, across the Meuse, kept in cold and insanitary cells several feet under ground. There they were lodged, as one officer describes, "with wet straw and the want of clothing renewed—and

this in the last days of December in that inclement climate."

In such circumstances did Brenton's men make their acquaintance with their place of captivity. As it befell, fortunately for them they were able to get in touch again with their Captain.

A letter was got through to Captain Brenton at Verdun informing him of the state of things. He promptly brought the complaint before the Commandant, and was able to obtain General Wirion's permission to visit the men at Givet himself. At the same time leave was further granted to Captain Brenton, by a special order from Paris, to make a round of the different depôts and do what he could for the British prisoners there also. As it happened, a request had been received from the British Government for Captain Brenton, as the senior officer at that time in captivity in France, to act as a species of agent or commissioner for the prisoners. The War Ministry in Paris did not consider it politic to refuse, on the score of humanity and to avoid a scandal. So Captain Brenton became authorized to visit the depôts in an official capacity. In regard to his first visit to Givet he makes this remark: "It is but justice to the French military authorities to record that every facility was given for the purpose of carrying out the object of the journey."

That was the case: but he had incidentally to submit to one minor annoyance, attributable to the petty spite of General Wirion. The General, as has been said, was Governor of Verdun during 1804. Wirion, for his part, while he might not refuse to assist Captain Brenton, went out of his way to treat him discourteously. On the plea —in itself an insult—that Brenton might break his parole and try to escape, he actually compelled him to travel throughout the tour in charge of a gendarme who shared Brenton's carriage and had his meals with him.

The man sent, furthermore, was one of the most cunning rogues under Wirion's orders.

No sooner had they started, relates Captain Brenton, than the gendarme began to regret that he "did not know a word of English." He went on to say that he was very anxious to learn the language, and, to show his eagerness, he kept asking the names of everything he saw, and making awkward attempts to copy Brenton's pronunciation. After that, by way of worming himself into the Captain's confidence, he proceeded to remark that he deeply commiserated with the British prisoners; indeed, he added, he really considered that those who had families in England were quite justified in any effort they might make to effect an escape. The Captain, however, had his wits about him. "This at once," comments Brenton, "put me on my guard as to the treachery I might expect from my companion if I were to give him the slightest advantage; and I consequently avoided the subject of the prisoners with the greatest care." All the wiles of the gendarme, indeed, proved unavailing to entrap the Captain, in spite of repeated attempts to put him off his guard.

A few weeks afterwards, when Captain Brenton was setting out from Verdun to visit another depôt in his capacity of Commissioner of Prisoners, under escort, as before, by Wirion's orders, the same gendarme was again forced on him. A friend had been allowed to accompany Brenton this time, and the Captain, under the impression, from his previous journey, that the gendarme (who, as before, also sat in the carriage) did not know English, chatted freely on all sorts of topics. The French Government, the First Consul, the treatment of the prisoners, and even the conduct of the man himself, whose gluttony and egregious vanity and boasting made him a very prominent subject for remark and ridicule, were all very freely handled. "All this," remarks Captain Brenton, "passed before him without producing the slightest effect upon the muscles of his countenance." Yet the fellow had understood every word. On Brenton's next return to Verdun, he discovered, in conversation with Colonel

Stack, one of the *détenus*, who has been previously mentioned, an Irishman then in the British army who had formerly done duty with the old Irish Brigade of the French monarchy, that the gendarme had served under Colonel Stack in the Irish Brigade for five years, and "understood and spoke English as well as he did French."

The task before Captain Brenton was no easy one. Although carried out with the nominal accord of the French Ministry of War, it proved in some cases almost impossible to perform, owing to the passive obstruction he encountered at Verdun when proposing to visit certain of the depôts. One visit in particular General Wirion flatly interdicted—to Sarrelibre, where a new depôt had been opened in 1804, for some of the younger seamen among the prisoners, who were to be kept there separately. "My request was refused," says Captain Brenton, adding this by way of one explanation. "An evident feeling of jealousy," he proceeds, "began at this time to manifest itself with regard to the influence the British officers exercised over their countrymen, and all communication was forbidden between them." Something was taking place at Sarrelibre it was not expedient Captain Brenton should see. Napoleon had turned his attention to the British prisoners as offering material for his Irish Legion, and his presence there would have checked the debauching process, as the influence of other officers did elsewhere. We have seen something of the working of the wicked scheme in the account that has been given of what went on at Givet.

During the time that Captain Brenton was at Verdun, he was untiring in his efforts to ameliorate the condition of the prisoners wherever possible, continually on the move, and travelling all over North-Eastern France. By means of the funds that were remitted to him from London he was able to make advances to officers and midshipmen, and also to assist the merchantship masters and mates, to whom the French authorities only doled

out the same pittance that ordinary seamen of the navy received. He visited the prisoners in hospital at Metz, Nancy, Luneville, Belmont, Phalsbourg, Sedan, and Bitche, accompanied on his rounds by an English clergyman, the Rev. Launcelot Lee, Vicar of a parish near Oxford, one of the *détenus* arrested in May, 1803, while travelling for health, who devoted all his time in captivity in going about among the prisoners of war. Two other clergymen of the Church of England, it may be added—the Rev. Robert B. Wolfe and the Rev. W. Gorden, a young priest of five-and-twenty—worked also unsparingly among the prisoners. Mr. Wolfe's sphere of labour was mainly at Givet, where, as has been described, his heroic self-devotion effected what was to all intents a very beneficent miracle.

He had, though, before that done good work at Verdun. There, before he left for Givet, Mr. Wolfe and his co-adjutor, Mr. Gorden, set up a school for the children of *détenus* and sailor-boys taken on men-of-war and merchantmen—lads under fifteen, which was the age-limit for English boys permitted to stay at Verdun. The two clergymen kept the school going in spite of strenuous opposition for several months, at the end of which time it was forcibly closed, and the other sailor-boys transferred in a body to Sarrelibre. General Wirion, who had eyed the establishment with suspicious dislike from the first, and had done his utmost to hamper its usefulness, shut the school up. Wirion put forward as his reason that it had broken the rules of the depôt by making a "political demonstration," because one Sunday the boys had been marched through the town to church—to the disused Convent building of pre-Revolution days, where Divine service was held on Sundays for the prisoners-of-war and *détenus*. A similar fate, it may be mentioned, also at General Wirion's hands, befell the day-school which Captain Brenton himself started at Verdun to keep the midshipmen there out of mischief, and enable them to

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continue their nautical studies and improve their education, much as we have seen he had previously done at Epinal. In this regard, indeed, Captain Brenton, in addition to his other duties, did not spare himself at all times in his efforts to save the younger officers from ruin in Wirion's gambling hell. His attempts were too often in vain, the Captain has sorrowfully to admit.

A second Captain of the Royal Navy joined Captain Brenton at Verdun towards the end of January, 1804—Captain Edward Leveson-Gower of the *Shannon*, whose ship had been wrecked off Cape La Hague some six weeks before. The two Captains, however, did not see much of one another, Leveson-Gower having, for one thing, to spend much of his time at Valenciennes, where the *Shannon's* men were confined. He had, by the way, very nearly brought Captain Brenton's younger brother with him to Verdun—Captain Edward Pelham Brenton, afterwards well known as a naval historian. The younger Brenton's ship had been in company with the *Shannon*, and was close to her when she was wrecked. A vivid flash of lightning in the storm showed up the rocks close ahead at the last moment, just in time to enable Brenton to claw his ship off and escape the *Shannon's* fate.

What made Captain Jahleel Brenton's captivity at Verdun the harder to bear was that, as he knew, an exchange for him had, during most of the time he was there, actually been arranged with Napoleon by the British Government. Within six months of his capture a French Captain, Jurien by name, had been released conditionally on parole by the British Government, and sent over to France in exchange for Captain Brenton; but, by a flagrant act of bad faith, Napoleon would not let Brenton go. More than that, indeed, Napoleon had refused to permit Captain Jurien to return and give himself up in England, according to the usage of civilized nations at war, in cases where proposed exchanges had fallen through. Half contemptuously Napoleon, in May, 1805, as a sort

of set-off, gave leave for Mrs. Brenton to come over from England and join her husband; also sanctioning their taking a house at a village called Etain, a few miles from Verdun.

Shortly before his wife joined him, Captain Brenton had one more of his many unpleasant experiences of General Wirion. One of the Verdun *détenus*, a man of some social position, broke his parole and escaped to England. He wrote from London to the French Government coolly justifying his act with the plea that no *détenu*, because of the scandalous circumstances of his arrest, considered his parole as binding. Immediately on the receipt of the letter instructions were sent to General Wirion to issue a severe warning to the *détenus* publicly. He carried out the instructions in his own way. He had Captain Brenton brought back to Verdun in close arrest, as well as several other wealthier prisoners of war and *détenus* who had been allowed as a special privilege to live outside the fortress. Thereupon Wirion had the gates of Verdun shut, and paraded all the prisoners, revoking the paroles of one and all, of every officer at the depôt, and every *détenu* in the town, and directing them to be kept in conditions of severe restraint. Happily for those concerned, however, on a complaint reaching Paris, General Wirion was ordered to take the restriction off and permit the prisoners to live as before.

After that, during most of the summer of 1805, Captain Brenton lived with his wife in a house he had now taken at Charni, a small village two miles from Verdun, where he was able to ride in and out on business every day. As before he had plenty to occupy himself with in seeing after the comfort of the prisoners at Verdun and the other depôts. A second Admiralty grant sent him from England, as well as prize-money due and special remuneration for the duties he had undertaken, enabled him to arrange financial matters satisfactorily, until in the autumn he fell ill and had to leave the district.

Captain Brenton, on his partial recovery, was permitted through the personal intervention with Napoleon of Admiral Décrès, the Minister of Marine, to take up his residence further south for the sake of his health—Tours being appointed as his new place of detention. He was allowed to travel there with his wife, without any escort, but adhering to a fixed route. He must on no account visit Paris, it was laid down, proceeding instead along a mapped-out line by Meaux, Melun, and Fontainebleau, and thence along the right bank of the Loire to Tours.

Captain Brenton left Verdun for Tours on the last day of October. While on his way, just after his arrival at Meaux on November 4, he suddenly heard the first news of Trafalgar.

This is how the Captain tells the story—it forms an interesting episode by itself:

"On going down to dinner my host received me with a broad grin and the following sentence: 'Ah, Monsieur, vous venez de nous rosser un peu sur mer, d'après les nouvelles!' Captain: 'Cela se peut bien.' Landlord: 'Oui, mais vous nous avez pris 21 vaisseaux de ligne!' Captain: 'Bah! vous voulez dire 21 batimens marchands.' Landlord: 'Non, Monsieur. Vingt-et-un vaisseaux de ligne, bien comptés: mais vous avez perdu Nelson! Il est tué!' This was the first intelligence I had received of the Battle of Trafalgar, which, however, had taken place on October 21, and this was November 4. I did not altogether credit my host's news, and left Meaux on the following morning.

"On my arriving at Melun, about two o'clock, I met Lord Elgin, who was then residing there as a *détenu*, who confirmed the news of a great naval victory having been gained and the report that Lord Nelson had fallen. 'But,' added his lordship, 'I am in hourly expectation of news from Paris, and as you only go as far as Fontainebleau to-night, I will, as soon as I get my letter, ride over and dine with you;' an offer that I gladly accepted.

"Accordingly, his lordship came by five o'clock with every particular of this action; at least as far as the French account went, which was surprisingly accurate. It was an account sent by merchants at Cadiz through Bordeaux to Paris. A very different statement was soon afterwards concocted for the information of the French nation in the columns of the *Moniteur*. One of M. Moet's best bottles was opened for Lord Elgin upon this occasion, and our spirits felt all the triumph of our country."

At Orleans, two days afterwards, Captain Brenton met a party of *détenus* from Verdun, who, like himself, had been allowed to reside for a time further south: a Mr. Aufrère and his family. "From this gentleman," says the Captain, "I procured further details of the Battle of Trafalgar, even to a list of killed and wounded on both sides. The intelligence had been brought from Cadiz through Madrid and Bayonne, in a mercantile correspondence, but was carefully concealed from the public in general. It is certain that the respectable classes in France by no means took that lively interest in their national successes, or felt that mortification at their unsuccessful results in their engagements with the enemy which have been ascribed to them at this period; and the reason is that under so ambitious a leader they were aware that every victory excited some new object for achievement, in consequence of which new conscriptions were called out, as well to supply recent losses as to form additional corps. They consoled themselves under a defeat in the hope that it might lead to peace."

Captain Brenton did not return to Verdun. He was permitted to remain at Tours, and in all spent a few weeks over a year there. From time to time the British Government made representations to Napoleon for his release, but a deaf ear was turned to every protest, all the representations from London being ignored. Apparently Napoleon thought him too capable an officer to let go,

although, as has been told, the French Captain exchanged against him had rejoined the Imperial naval service.

The bitter disappointment, and the mental unrest caused by the rebuffs to the demands for his release from England, told heavily on Brenton, as the Captain himself relates. He became at times very gloomy over his fate, worrying at being so shelved and deprived of opportunities of professional advancement. Indeed, as he got to think, Napoleon's apparently fixed determination was to retain him in captivity as long as the war should last. It was all that Brenton's most intimate friend at Tours, another of the *détenus*, a medical man, Dr. (afterwards Sir Thomas) Grey, who had attended him at Verdun, and with his own wife and daughter had been allowed to go for health to Tours, could do to rouse him from his fits of depression.

"One evening," says Captain Brenton, "when walking in the room with Dr. Grey, I said I felt a conviction that I was a prisoner for the remainder of the war, and that my naval career was at an end. He replied, 'Don't give way to such feelings; how do you know but that you may be exchanged, have the command of a fine frigate, and take a prize before the year is over?' I answered smiling, 'If that should be the case, Doctor, I promise to give you the "Encyclopædia Britannica."' Impossible as it seemed to be at the moment," adds Captain Brenton, recording the sequel, "the Doctor did get that work, upon these conditions, before the year expired."

The Brentons lived in a country house in the neighbourhood of Tours, but the Captain's duty as Commissioner for British Prisoners in France still kept him very busy. Most of his work had now to be done by correspondence, but there was also a good deal which kept him actively employed on the spot. Tours was on the high road from Bordeaux, Passages, and Rochefort to the prisoner-depôts in the north, and there were frequently detachments of sailors passing through. Among these, as Brenton mentions, were the captured ships' companies of the men-of-war

Calcutta and *Ranger*, and the *Belle* packet, who passed through on their way to Verdun and Arras. All, on reaching Tours, were confined in the common prison, indiscriminately as they arrived, no regard being paid to the rank of any of the officers. Captain Brenton was first informed of what was going on by the landlord of one of the town hotels, "with an eye to business," as the Captain suggests. Anyhow, he acted promptly and effectively. He went straight off to the General in command at Tours, and as the result of his angry protest the officers were at once released on parole, and hot meals were sent to the sailors and marines, provided by money privately subscribed within an hour by Captain Brenton and certain friends at Tours.

From Captain Brenton also we learn this of the feelings of the people in that part of France in regard to Napoleon's victories. The Captain was at Tours, as he relates, when the news came of the overthrow of the Prussians at Jena, and witnessed the parade, according to the French practice under Napoleon, of the municipality "in grand costumes" through the streets in celebration of the victory. The generality of the people in that neighbourhood, remarks Brenton, of the class who had to provide the *chair au canon*, did not take the triumph at all jubilantly. "While looking on I overheard this said among the people: 'Eh! Voila une autre victoire! Cela nous donnera une autre conscription!'"

Within a very few weeks of that time came, all unexpectedly, the fulfilment of the first part of Dr. Grey's prophecy. At the moment Captain Brenton was again in one of his gloomy moods. It was just after Fox's negotiations with France for peace had finally broken down. In his anger at the refusal of the British Government to give way to his demands, Napoleon had abruptly stopped all intercourse with England: "All communications with England, even the transfer of bills, was positively forforbidden." More than that, adds Captain Brenton, "from

Napoleon's increased ill-humour towards the English I momentarily expected to lose my parole." He would, in that event, be sent back to Verdun in custody, and undergo there rigorous confinement at the pleasure of his tyrannical gaoler, General Wirion.

But, in the midst of the prevailing gloom, the sky suddenly cleared for Captain Brenton. All in a moment, as it were, the utterly unexpected happened. "I was under the impression of those feelings," as the Captain tells the story, "when one morning, on returning from a walk, I found my wife in tears. A gendarme, I was told, had come, requiring my immediate attendance on the General. The visit of a gendarme rarely boded anything favourable to a prisoner. I had, of course, to go, but much perturbed in mind. I hastened to the General, expecting some unpleasant communication, but to my great surprise and joy was received with great cordiality and these unexpected words: 'Monsieur, vous n'êtes plus prisonnier. . . . Je vous en felicite!'" Says Captain Brenton: "*I ran home!*"

A genuine exchange had been granted to him, it soon turned out, for one of the French Captains taken at Trafalgar—Infernet, Masséna's nephew. Marshal Masséna had pestered Napoleon into procuring Infernet's exchange, and the British Government, on their side, had insisted on having Captain Brenton back and nobody else.

Thanks to the good offices of the Perrégaux, the bankers in Paris, ready money for travelling expenses was forthcoming. "They had heard of his release," wrote the bankers, "and to prevent the possibility of delay or 'accident,' should his Imperial Majesty change his mind, sent an advance of £100 for the expenses of the journey to England, which Captain Brenton might pay at his convenience after his arrival home." The captain and his wife started forthwith for Morlaix, the appointed port of departure, taking with them Doctor and Mrs. Grey and their family, whose release Captain Brenton had been

able to arrange for with the Minister of Marine, Admiral Décrès. They all set sail on December 27 in a French brig, which Captain Brenton hired at sixty louis d'or for the passage.

Even at the last moment though, as it would appear, an attempt was made to hold Captain Brenton back. The excuse of the finding of some private papers which Brenton had dropped was used to try and again place him in arrest. He was to wait until their contents had been explained to the satisfaction of Napoleon. Fortunately, however, the measures were taken just too late. The messenger, sent express to prevent Brenton from embarking, galloped up to the Prefecture at Morlaix, to learn that the brig he was on board was under sail and beyond cannon-shot of the harbour batteries.

Captain Brenton set foot again on his native soil two days later.

He was not—it may be added to conclude the narrative—the first of the *Minerve's* people to reach England and regain freedom. Some of the crew had made their escape before that, as also Brenton was aware. The fact also proved of use to him. When warned to attend the court-martial appointed to inquire into the loss of the *Minerve*, before which tribunal, in the ordinary course, Captain Brenton had to go immediately after reporting his arrival to the Admiralty, there being no commissioned officers of the ship available to give evidence as witnesses, he had inquiries made as to the whereabouts of the escaped seamen among all the ships at the ports, with the result that half a dozen of his men came forward who had escaped from Givet—two boatswain's mates and four seamen and marines. Their testimony was sufficient at the trial to win for Captain Brenton a highly honourable acquittal as having done his duty to the utmost of his power.

THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF MAJOR-GENERAL LORD BLAYNEY

THE most notable of Napoleon's military prisoners at Verdun was a British Major-General, Lord Blayney, who was captured in the south of Spain in the autumn of 1810, during the Peninsular War, when in command of an expedition from Gibraltar operating in rear of the French Army then besieging Cadiz.

Lord Blayney was one of the three British Generals taken by Napoleon during the war, and was also among the prisoners at Verdun. The other two British Generals who fell into the hands of the French were Lord John Murray, and Sir Edward Paget, one of Wellington's most capable divisional Generals, who was captured during the retreat from Burgos. General Paget had ridden to the rear to hurry up a column which was lagging behind, when, in passing through a wood, a party of French chasseurs galloped up and carried him off, although British troops were marching within a quarter of a mile on either side. He was riding by himself and at first sight apparently mistook the French horsemen for British dragoons, whose uniform was somewhat similar, in consequence allowing them to approach too near.

He was an Irish peer—Andrew Thomas, Baron Blayney of Blayney Castle, Co. Monaghan, a member of an ancient family, originally from Wales, which had been settled in Ireland ever since Queen Elizabeth's time—and an officer of some distinction for the varied service he had seen in many parts of the world. Beginning his

career in the Flanders campaign under the Duke of York, he had been actively employed in Ireland at the time of the Rebellion of '98, and then had his part at the siege and capture of Malta. He had seen service next with Suwarroff's Russian Army in Switzerland; with Abercrombie in Egypt; and in the West Indies at the taking of several of the islands from the French; as well as at the taking of Cape Colony from the Dutch; and finally under General Whitelocke in the disastrous campaign of Buenos Ayres in 1806. As a young Captain also Lord Blayney had had a hand in raising the 89th Regiment for the British Army, and had served with it as a major on various expeditions.

The year 1810 found Lord Blayney a Major-General in the Gibraltar Garrison, to which he had been attached, for one thing because of his linguistic attainments in Spanish as well as French. His restless energy, however, could not be restrained within the limits of the Rock, and he badgered the then Governor, General Campbell, into sending him off at the head of some fifteen hundred men to raid Marshal Soult's line of communications in Andalusia and assist the Spanish peasantry round Malaga in their guerilla warfare with the French troops covering the siege of Cadiz. Only three hundred of the troops in the expedition were British, three companies of Lord Blayney's old regiment, the 89th. The bulk of the force was comprised of a corps of Spanish regulars, eight hundred strong, and between four and five hundred deserters from Soult's army, mostly Germans, Poles, and Italians, a motley horde, who were formed into a regiment for the expedition.

They sailed in transports, escorted by two British men of war, and were landed on the coast between Gibraltar and Malaga, to meet disaster in their first fight. Getting timely information from his spies of what was going on in that quarter, Soult detached General Sebastiani with a division of five thousand troops to intercept Lord Blay-

ney. The unfortunate expedition was surprised and attacked in force, and in the result practically captured *en bloc*, the General together with his men; owing mainly to the bad behaviour of Blayney's regiment of deserters. These ran off at the opening of the fight, whereupon the Spanish regulars gave way. General Blayney and the three companies of the 89th were surrounded and charged by an overpowering body of French troops, and after a desperate resistance, hand to hand, the British detachment was compelled to call for quarter. General Blayney had his horse shot under him, got separated from the rest of the British and had a fierce tussle for his life, mobbed in the middle of a throng of men of Napoleon's 4th Polish Infantry.

"A ferocious banditti," is what Blayney calls his assailants, "who loaded me with every vile epithet, but in whose outrageous violence, I, in great measure, found my personal safety, for they crowded so thick on me that they had not room to give force to their blows. They tore my clothes, rifled my pockets, and attempted to pull off my epaulettes; and the resistance I made to this last indignity procured me several blows from the butt ends of their muskets that covered me with contusions. I was, indeed, probably indebted for my life to a Lieutenant Pelet of the Polish Regiment, who opportunely came up on horseback: he was the only French officer with the corps, and his humane and gentlemanly conduct did credit to his country."

Lord Blayney after that had to undergo some hours of captivity and ill-treatment at the hands of the Polish regimental Colonel, until, on the following day, General Sebastiani himself sent for him. Thenceforward for some time everything was changed. A British General was a big prize, and Sebastiani was a courteous and considerate officer as well as a generous foe. He received Lord Blayney in the most friendly manner, recommended him to the good offices of his staff, and gave him his

parole as a prisoner at large, until arrangements should be made for his transportation to France with the other British prisoners taken.

"After the first salutation," describes Lord Blayney, "he inquired what had become of my sword, and on my answering that I supposed that some of the other officers or soldiers had it in their possession, General Milhaw (Milhaud) instantly took off his own and presented it to me, saying: 'Monsieur le Général, here is one which has been employed in all the campaigns against the Austrians, Russians, and Prussians. It is now much at your service.' This speech, though tinctured with the vanity natural to a Frenchman, was applauded by the bravos of both officers and soldiers who were within hearing. I accepted the sword, and, indeed, felt somewhat gratified at being paid such a public compliment by an enemy."

Nothing, indeed, could exceed the polite attentions of General Sebastiani and his staff to their principal prisoner. The British General dined with the French officers at Malaga, and his baggage was sent for under a flag of truce from the man-of-war on board which Lord Blayney had come round from Gibraltar. The frigate *Topaze*, with a seventy-four, the *Rodney*, had escorted the expedition. Blayney's only grievance was that he had to appear in public at General Sebastiani's *levée* before the chief civil officials of Malaga, French and Spanish, and had to attend a public dinner given by the French staff officers to Sebastiani in honour of his success. He was otherwise treated with great consideration, and was permitted to go on to Granada, on the first stage of his long journey to France, ahead of the other prisoners by himself, escorted by one of Sebastiani's aides-de-camp and some Polish Lancers. At Granada Lord Blayney was treated more as a guest by the French officers of the garrison than as a prisoner, and on Sebastiani's arrival there a day or two later, he was again invited to dine with the General, concluding a festive evening with a visit to the theatre in

company with Sebastiani and his staff. On another day he rode out to visit the Alhambra, Sebastiani and his officers accompanying him; the trip, indeed, having been specially planned in consequence of Blayney having said at dinner on the previous day that he much wanted to see the Alhambra. They wound up the afternoon by a picnic.

For some reason the other British officers, who had been made prisoners at the same time as General Blayney, were treated quite differently. Sebastiani had granted them parole, but an order from Marshal Soult deprived them of the privilege, and they were kept close prisoners with the men of the 89th, under an armed guard in the camp. General Blayney, on the other hand, was allowed to go about as he pleased. He attended, as he relates, several social gatherings at Granada, among others that he mentions, the Duchess of Goa's evening parties, at which cards were played for high stakes; both General Sebastiani and Lord Blayney taking part among the players. He breakfasted and dined every day, he tells us, with Sebastiani and his staff.

While he was at Malaga, as Blayney relates, the Spanish patriot army of General Blake was defeated in the neighbourhood. The British General witnessed the triumphal parade of the prisoners through the city, and was invited to the ball given to celebrate the event, and taken to see the fireworks and illuminations.

At breakfast with Sebastiani on the following morning he witnessed another side of the French General's character. The incident is thus recorded: "An officer entered with a verbal report of some deserters being retaken. 'Qu'on les pend tout de suite,' replied the General, without altering a feature or saying another word on the subject. The officer bowed and retired."

Lord Blayney left Granada early in November, riding off on a horse presented to him as a gift by Sebastiani, who also supplied him with mules to carry his baggage, and gave him introductions to French officers elsewhere,

directing every attention to be paid him. Blayney describes his parting from the French staff officers as most friendly: "they also presented me with letters for their relatives in France, asking them to show me every hospitality." So he started off on his three months' journey to France, escorted by twelve dragoons and two staff officers, and going ahead, by a few hours, of the convoy of British prisoners.

It seems to have been, at any rate during the first part of the journey, almost a pleasure trip for the British General, he being allowed to visit the cathedrals in the cities he passed through and any places of interest he wanted to see. In one town, where the prisoners' convoy halted for two days, he was invited to join the French General in command of the garrison and his staff on a sporting excursion, coursing hares with a pack of a dozen greyhounds. The party, we are told, to avoid interference from Spanish guerillas, was "escorted by 100 Dragoons, some of whom rode ahead as beaters."

At Andujar in Andalusia he came across a party of English prisoners—marines and sailors—who had been taken during the siege operations at Cadiz, along the coast in the neighbourhood. One of them, a midshipman, complained bitterly of the ill-treatment they had been subjected to on the way, but Blayney, though he spoke up for them to the French authorities, was unable apparently to do anything to alleviate their position.

At Manzanares in La Mancha he witnessed a bull-fight, he relates, and attended a ball and dined with the French General. At Toledo he was received with similar courtesy by the French authorities, and allowed, as usual, to go about freely and see the sights of the city and visit the cathedral.

At Toledo, indeed, where he arrived on November 29, Lord Blayney met with another little experience. It was at a dinner party given by the French General in command of the garrison specially in his honour, to which the prin-

cipal people of the place were invited, expressly, as General Blayney relates, to meet him.

"The moment we sat down the General informed me that he had purposely provided a treat of roast beef and plum-pudding, both of which he assured me were dressed '*à l'Anglaise.*' Carving an immense slice, which proved to be scarcely warmed, he exclaimed triumphantly, 'Du moins je crois que cela doit être à votre goût!' This exclamation drew on me the eyes of the whole company, who seemingly expected, with anxious curiosity, to see me devour the raw and tough carrion. As I could not, with politeness, send it away untouched, I forced myself to swallow a few mouthfuls, which a glass of brandy assisted me to keep down. The plum-pudding was then served up, and could only be equalled in execrableness by the beef, being a solid lump of half-boiled dough that would have required the power of an ostrich to digest. Added to these little *désagrémens*, the General was most extremely civil, particularly with his hands, which were scarce a moment off my shoulders. He also wearied me with a history of his achievements."

Following on the roast-beef and plum-pudding came a *soirée* in the drawing-room of the Commander's residence.

"After dinner, several visitors arriving, he proposed retiring upstairs, where there were prepared a good fire, plenty of punch and cards. After a sober rubber at whist, the punch beginning to mount, *trente et quarante* was introduced, but as my purse was rather low I told the General I could not play deep, whereupon he produced a heap of gold and begged me to help myself. At first I had a run of extreme bad luck, and became considerably in debt, but fortune changing, I at last rose a winner to the amount of £400."

All the time the unfortunate British officers and soldiers taken prisoners with General Blayney were being kept closely guarded in Toledo, experiencing hardships which the indulgence shown to their Commander made it the

harder to bear. Indeed, one rather wonders that the General did not give back his own parole, and elect to share the sufferings of his fellow-countrymen in distress. At any rate, he did not do so, although he appears to have made protests on their behalf to the authorities.*

From Toledo he proceeded direct to Madrid, for the final stage of the journey, keeping in company with the column of prisoners. All were heavily escorted by cavalry and a force of infantry, belonging to Napoleon's foreign troops, on whom fell, as has been said, most of the routine drudgery of war service: two battalions of the Hesse Darmstadt regiment—which Wellington made an example of at Badajoz—and one of the Spanish regiments in Napoleon's pay. Speaking of what he saw on the march, General Blayney remarks: "It would be difficult to say which, the Spaniards or the Germans, were more brutal in their conduct to the prisoners." Why did not Lord Blayney let go his parole privileges when he saw that going on, and throw in his lot with them, then and there?

He also mentions this incident as having taken place while he was riding alongside the prisoners; describing how one of the men of the escort belonging to the Spanish regiment, spoke to him: "The man proved to be a deserter from the 87th. He admitted that he had suffered so much since his desertion that he would willingly undergo any punishment short of death to be once more restored to his country. I listened to him with the more satisfaction," adds Lord Blayney, "as he was overheard by some of our soldiers who had shown symptoms of an intention of entering the French service."

Lord Blayney's French host at Toledo, the Commandant of the garrison, General Lavoisier, accompanied the convoy to Madrid—much to Blayney's personal inconvenience, for he had instinctively taken a strong dislike to the General, who kept pestering him with his attentions, and repeatedly asked the British General to consider himself as his guest.

* See Lieutenant James's narrative, p. 171.

The French General, as Lord Blayney relates, during the journey incidentally provided the British prisoners with a display on his own account, which caused everybody considerable amusement:

"As we were approaching Madrid the General mounted his charger and put on his full uniform, which was superb in the extreme, and consequently calculated to inspire respect in the soldiery, although his hat, edged with feathers, certainly too much resembled that of a drum-major. The General, being excessively vain both of his horse and horsemanship, in order to show them off, set out at a full gallop in the deepest part of the road. Though on a miserable Spanish hack, I was determined to show off too, and getting my beast into a prancing canter I soon passed the General, who, putting spurs to his horse at the same time that he slacked the reins, and the animal being knee-deep in mud, came down as might be expected, and rolled over his rider.

"The Aides-de-camp and some *Chasseurs* immediately ran to his assistance, but the miserable pickle he was in, and his ludicrous grimaces, almost discomposed their gravity, and they could scarcely refrain from laughing aloud at the bedaubed face and uniform of their General. Such is the force of natural pride, even in trifles, that while I pitied the General's plight I congratulated myself on having proved my superior horsemanship for the honour of Old England; and my satisfaction was increased by reflecting that had the same accident happened to me the whole detachment would have triumphed both at the expense of my country and myself. A short halt was the consequence of the General's mishap, and when he was rubbed down and tolerably clean we proceeded towards Madrid."

The irrepressible Levoisier, however, could not, appatently, refrain from showing off. "We entered Madrid riding through a great number of streets at full gallop over a slippery pavement, at the risk of breaking our necks or

being trampled to death if our horses came down on us, merely to gratify the absurd vanity of the French General who wished to create astonishment."

Lord Blayney was courteously received on presenting his letter of introduction from Sebastiani to General Beliard, the Governor of Madrid, but, to his surprise, he was informed at the close of the interview that by King Joseph's express order he was to be quartered as a close prisoner in the Retiro, a former Royal palace of the Spanish Kings which the French had converted into a military prison. Expostulation was useless. He had to submit, and was conducted to the Retiro to pass "a most uncomfortable night there on a hard bed swarming with vermin."

Further expostulations next morning with the Governor of the Retiro had no effect. He was treated discourteously, and to add to the indignities offered him, was turned back at the gateway by the sentry when going out by invitation to breakfast with General Beliard. In the end permission was given him to pass out, but he had to undergo the humiliation of being "accompanied like a prisoner by the *Adjudant de Place*."

At Beliard's quarters, he had another unpleasant experience. In the ante-room on his arrival he found awaiting him an ex-British officer, who had deserted in the field, "a traitor Irishman named Walsh, formerly of the 9th Foot," now on Beliard's staff as an A.D.C. "Walsh," says Lord Blayney, "tried to be excessively civil," but the British General held back. "I met his advances with coolness and contempt."

In due course, then, General Beliard was announced and entered, "his little round figure covered in lace and embroidery." Lord Blayney forthwith repeated his protests as to his accommodation and treatment of the morning, but the only reply was that he would doubtless not stay long in the Retiro, only indeed until a *billet de logement* could be procured for him in better quarters.

After breakfast his former liberty to go where he liked was restored, and Lord Blayney was allowed to wander at large in Madrid for the day, visiting the principal churches and sights of the city, and going to the theatre. While looking about him, he again met his *bête noir* of the march from Toledo, General Lavoisier, "who invited me to dinner and recapitulated his bill of fare, which was sumptuous." As a matter of policy Blayney accepted the invitation, and on the evening fixed went to the General's quarters—to find that Lavoisier had forgotten all about his guest, and had gone off calmly to dine out with somebody else!

General Blayney, during his first week, did his best, he tells us, by personal intervention, to procure better treatment for his fellow-prisoners; and in particular for some other British captives whom he had found shut up in the Retiro behind the bars of a cramped and dirty dungeon. "I found," he says, "several English and Maltese sailors confined with a considerable number of Germans in a small dungeon where the air could not be renewed, and that the only provisions they received were black bread and water." But his efforts to help them met with no success. He was unable to get permission "even for the prisoners to go into fresh air under guard once a day."

Still, though, Lord Blayney persevered, and at the last he succeeded; the prisoners having become riotous in consequence of the short supply of food. According to the regulations half a pound of meat daily for each man had been contracted for, but none at all ever reached the prisoners. On making that discovery, Lord Blayney had an angry interview with the *Adjudant de Place*, the official directly involved. The interchange of indignant words became so hot that at one point the Frenchman lost his temper and laid his hand on his sword. The Adjutant was finally brought to his senses by a frank threat from Lord Blayney to report what he had learned personally to General Beliard in a form that would make the affair

a public scandal. After that the prisoners got at least their proper ration of meat.

The British General was able also, by talking about the miserable condition of the prisoners at the *petits soupers* and social gatherings which he was allowed to attend, to interest some of the Spanish society ladies at Madrid, and some of them in consequence took to visiting the prisoners and bringing them food and clothing, though they had difficulties occasionally with the guards. Lord Blayney succeeded further in getting sufficient warm clothing provided for all the British Retiro prisoners, drawing bills for the expense on the British Government at his own personal initiative. For the British officers made prisoners with him, who had also now been restored their parole, he succeeded in obtaining certain indulgences. One of these was, as we are told, leave to dine at the Fonda St. Martin, the fashionable restaurant of Madrid, where General Blayney himself, whenever he could, dined in public with them, the gathering making a sort of temporary mess. A number of French officers of the garrison, we are also told, sometimes joined the party at dinner and made themselves very friendly, "all getting on very pleasantly together."

Among other diversions during his stay in Madrid, Lord Blayney attended a Masonic Lodge of French officers. A large number, if not the majority, of Napoleon's officers were Masons; and it had indeed been, as it would appear, Lord Blayney's membership of the Craft that at the outset induced General Sebastiani and his *entourage* to show him such friendliness and hospitality.

"One evening," relates Lord Blayney, "I received a visit from an officer of the 26th *Chasseurs à Cheval* to request my company at a Masonic meeting. The forms of admission were very serious, but I went through them sufficiently well and received a warm welcome from the brethren, particularly from Colonel Vial, commanding the 26th Chasseurs, who was Master of the Lodge, and who

invited me to dinner and supper next day. At supper, "when the punch began to mount," Lord Blayney goes on, "each played some ridiculous trick to divert the company: one making hideous grimaces; another taking off a priest in his robes by means of a towel on his fingers; a third shaped mice out of parings of apple. Indeed," adds the General rather unkindly, "I must do the French the justice to acknowledge that they far excel us in the art of making fools of themselves *pour passer le temps*."

He had still to return and sleep every night in the Retiro, though in rather better quarters than at first, until at last he was appointed lodgings in the city, in the house of a Monsieur Guillet, a French civil official of King Joseph's suite who was employed as the Royal Art Agent, his work being to go round and spy among the galleries of Spain and private collections for choice pictures which the Royal plunderer might lay hands on. Lord Blayney disliked the man from the first, suspecting that Guillet was also acting as a spy on himself, but he could do nothing in the matter; and being something of an art *connoisseur* on his own account, he utilized Guillet's offered services as a *cicerone* over the chief of the picture galleries of the Spanish capital. In the end, though, he could tolerate the Frenchman's persistent intrusions no longer, and quitting Monsieur Guillet, he sought and obtained leave to return to his former quarters in the Retiro.

As far as he was personally concerned, says General Blayney, the French officers of the French garrison were unremitting in their attentions to him. A party of them took him one day over the Royal Palace on a private visit to examine the numerous treasures of statuary and painting that King Joseph kept there. On another day he was taken out on horseback to witness a cavalry review. In the evenings some of the French officers would call for him and take him to billiard matches or concerts, or to military dinner parties at which he figured as the principal guest, these usually winding up with "punches

of honour," at which there was music and cards. Lord Blayney got on very well at cards, he tells us, his skill, or luck, enabling him to leave off constantly a substantial winner.

One day his Masonic friend, Colonel Vial of the 26th Chasseurs, with the other officers of the regiment, took Lord Blayney out for several hours coursing in the neighbourhood. They went out for some miles beyond Madrid with eight couple of greyhounds, the party being escorted by half a hundred Chasseurs and Polish Lancers, owing to a report that a dangerous Spanish guerilla band had been raiding in the neighbourhood. "I rode" on the occasion, records General Blayney, "an English mare captured at Talavera."

Another day's outing with the hospitable Colonel Vial and his officers, however, had an unpleasant sequel for the British General. It led to an abrupt curtailment of Lord Blayney's privileges on parole at Madrid. They all had an enjoyable afternoon's ride, and dined *al fresco* in a village, after which, amid the convivialities, they apparently forgot about the time. At any rate, they got back to Madrid to find the city gates shut for the night, and had to sleep in another village near by. On entering Madrid next morning Lord Blayney found General Beliard in a fever about him, a report having got about during the night that the British General had made his escape aided by the guerillas. Suspicious and angry, Beliard refused to accept Lord Blayney's explanation, although corroborated by Colonel Vial, and sent him off under escort to the Retiro, to remain there under arrest until further orders. At the same time, it being rumoured that a plot to escape was on foot, the other British officers on parole at Madrid with Lord Blayney were summarily deprived of their privileges of going about the streets of the city independently at will. Henceforward they were only to be allowed out of the Retiro, it was ordered, for exercise during two hours daily, and then to go only in parties, with an officer of the Retiro garrison in charge of each party.

Lord Blayney himself, although confined within the precincts of the Retiro, was treated as being in open arrest, and allowed to have friends in to see him every afternoon. Among those who came to visit him, he tells us, were several of the Spanish society ladies whose acquaintance he had made, and who, "to relieve the irksomeness of the situation, sang and played and gave concerts." A talented and versatile Irishman, Lord Blayney, by way of further keeping *ennui* at bay, occupied himself between whiles by giving cookery lessons to the British officers, his fellow-prisoners. He was a good cook, as he relates, having acquired the art during his previous campaigns when obliged to shift for himself. Indeed, too, he says, he had usually cooked his own dinner when on march from Granada to Madrid.

By way of further occupation, Lord Blayney at the same time, for the special benefit of his friends, the officers of Colonel Vial's Chasseurs, started a series of lectures on the treatment of sick horses in the field. The fame of these lectures, after the delivery of the first two or three, spread, Blayney records, all over Madrid, and brought into the Retiro a crowd of French cavalry officers eager to hear them. He was a clever linguist, speaking, as he tells us, both French and Spanish fluently. An additional result of his lectures, relates Lord Blayney, was that sick horses from several regiments in the garrison were sent to him for treatment almost every day.

The authorities, however, before long, began to look askance at General Blayney's activities. Some sinister motive must be at the back of them, they suspected. General Beliard, who cordially disliked and distrusted the British General, struck this time harder than before. He abruptly stopped the lectures and the cookery classes, and ordered Lord Blayney to be kept under close arrest. He placed him, further, in the personal custody of "a brutal Lieutenant of the 34th Infantry," who was directed to keep the British General under constant surveillance.

"Two sentries," says Lord Blayney, "were placed at the door of my apartment, and they also attended me in the very short space allowed me for exercise."

The only indulgence permitted him was on Christmas Day, when Lord Blayney was allowed to dine in one of the halls of the Retiro with the other British officers, his fellow-prisoners. "They were very convivial," the General records, until nine o'clock, when Lord Blayney's custodian, the Lieutenant of the 34th, "suddenly put in an appearance with the two gendarmes, and curtly ordered us all off to our beds." Some heated language passed, we are told, between the General and the officer, until the Lieutenant "in the end sulkily withdrew;" but the joviality of the gathering was at an end for the night.

Four days afterwards, on December 29, Lord Blayney and the British prisoners in the Retiro were marched out at short notice, and started off, heavily escorted, on their way to France.

It was a trying experience for all, "the frost very severe, and the cold greater than I ever felt in England."

Though nominally restored his parole, Lord Blayney, by General Beliard's orders, had to keep with the convoy of prisoners; the reason officially given being that an attempt at his release was believed to be contemplated by a guerilla chief in the neighbourhood. The French, Lord Blayney remarks, were "terribly nervous" about the guerillas during the first marches. "When we came to any difficult pass nothing but 'brigands' was in the mouths of the French officers, whose apprehensions were plainly visible in their looks and conversation; and yet these were the braggadocios who, according to their own accounts, had encountered hosts."

No guerillas, however, seemed to be on the prowl in the neighbourhood of Madrid, and after the first day or two of the march the closeness of the guard over Lord Blayney was relaxed.

On the convoy reaching Segovia, he and the British

officers were restored to the full privileges of their parole. General Blayney, on his arrival, paid a complimentary call on the French Commandant of the garrison, whom he found "very courteous and agreeable," and who allowed him to amuse himself, as before, in visiting the Alcazar and the cathedral, and seeing the other sights of the place. He was billeted for the night in a "fine house," with the other British officers in good quarters next door. Lord Blayney, though, made one unpleasant discovery at Segovia. In going over the castle he came upon an English lad, apparently a drummer-boy, closely confined in a stone-paved cell, in chains, and without a fire, despite the bitter cold of the weather. The poor young fellow, a prisoner taken in action, was undergoing that cruel punishment, it was elicited, for having refused to let himself be seduced into joining the Irish Legion then in Spain. Apparently Lord Blayney found himself unable to do anything for the unfortunate youth before the convoy of prisoners resumed its march next day. At any rate, the General says no more about him.

On the way to Valladolid, during the second stage of the journey, Lord Blayney was again allowed to go ahead of the other prisoners by himself, accompanied by his English soldier attendant, with the General's baggage, and good quarters were provided him at every halt, together with the customary freedom to visit places of interest along the route—old castles, churches, and historic remains.

While riding one day about half a mile from the convoy and off the road, he was, he relates, the spectator of a sharp fight between the French escort of the convoy and a band of guerillas, in which the Spaniards were beaten off with considerable loss to the French. "Many of the English prisoners," remarks Lord Blayney, "being loosely guarded, managed to escape." Incidentally, he witnessed many cases, as he records, of the brutal maltreatment of the Spanish peasantry by the French. On the other

hand, he came across in more than one place near the road "the bodies of French soldiers who had been gibbeted by the peasants."

At Valladolid, Lord Blayney was billeted on one of the leading Spanish merchants of the city, who treated him with marked consideration, as did, he records, the French General in command of the garrison, the celebrated Kellerman, son of the hero of Marengo, Napoleon's brilliant General of Cuirassiers. Kellerman's reception of him, describes Lord Blayney, "was most kindly and gentlemanly."

At Burgos—just outside which fortress he passed "the bodies of eighteen unfortunate Spanish peasants hanging from trees by the highway as a warning to the neighbourhood"—he made the acquaintance of some of the officers of the Imperial Guard who were stationed there. At Vittoria he saw more of them, and also the Cavalry of the Guard. Caffarelli, their commander, paid Lord Blayney, as he relates, "great attention and politeness," and took him to see a full-dress parade of the Chasseurs of the Guard, Napoleon's favourite corps, whose uniform the Emperor always wore in camp. The smartness of their drill and general turn-out greatly impressed General Blayney, as he records.

The final stage of his journey through Spain took Lord Blayney through the Pyrenees to the French frontier at St. Jean de Luz. There he was ordered to separate from the convoy of prisoners and make his way through France to Verdun independently.

Lord Blayney was to meet with further instances of the enemy's courtesy on his journey through France; together with, on occasion, other experiences to remind him that he was a prisoner of war.

At St. Jean de Luz he called as usual on the Commandant of the garrison, a General Sols, by whom he was received "with the politeness of the old French school." So well apparently did he impress General Sols that the

General, in the course of the interview, showed Lord Blayney a letter about him which Sols had received from General Beliard at Madrid, "recommending a strict surveillance to be kept over me as a dangerous character." General Sols remarked, however, that he proposed to pay no attention to the letter, in consequence of the favourable report he had received from the officers of the convoy escort.

Next, Lord Blayney received an intimation that Marshal Bessières, at Bayonne, who commanded the army corps stationed on the Spanish frontier, would like to see him. Blayney proceeded forthwith to Bayonne, and called upon the Marshal. Bessières, he relates, received him "in a stiff and formal manner at first," but he soon altered his tone and "became gentleman-like." A certain Captain A., explained the Marshal, who had been made prisoner with Lord Blayney, and was on parole, had made his escape during the journey through Northern Spain. In consequence, said the Marshal, he was inclined to treat Lord Blayney rigorously. The two, however, as they talked, drifted into familiarity, and at the end the interview was closed by Marshal Bessières, in the most affable manner, asking Lord Blayney to dinner next day. The invitation was of course accepted, and Blayney, as he relates, went to the dinner "in full uniform." Apparently he quite won over Marshal Bessières, who not only gave him an excellent dinner, but "had a case of Madeira specially opened for me." At the close of the evening Bessières asked Lord Blayney to come and see him again before leaving Bayonne. He would like, said the genial Frenchman, to give him letters of introduction to friends at Bordeaux, "which would ensure at least a good dinner and good wine." Lord Blayney called again in due course, whereupon the Marshal, in addition to giving him the letters of introduction promised, tendered him a hundred louis d'or as a personal loan, in case he should run short of money on his journey. Bessieres offered him a further

sum, indeed, should he think he might want it. Lord Blayney accepted the original loan, but declined the second; and, as he puts it, "we parted the best of friends."

As in Spain, the General was permitted to go about Bayonne much as he pleased; even to go on board and inspect several American schooners—recently confiscated under Napoleon's Berlin Decree—which were being equipped to run the gauntlet of the British fleet and carry reinforcements for the garrison of Mauritius. He met also a number of French officers, some of whom, it turned out, he had come across in Egypt when Lord Blayney was serving in Abercrombie's army, after the Battle of Aboukir, with whom he soon found himself on the most friendly terms. From Bayonne he set out for Bordeaux, going off again by himself with his soldier servant and baggage mules, and taking his own road as a matter of convenience: "avoiding the highway which was crowded with troops."

At Bordeaux, also, Lord Blayney managed to make things pleasant for himself: making new friends and being hospitably entertained, going to the theatre and seeing all there was to see. In return for the kindness shown him he gave a big dinner party to his French friends at the best hotel in the city. Among other officials, he called, as an act of policy, on the Commissary of Police, by whom he was informed, in the most friendly way—to give him an idea how he was really all the time under close surveillance, —not only of all his movements and visits, but even of "the number of bottles we had drunk the evening before, with the whole particulars of our conversation." An American doctor, living at Bordeaux, Lord Blayney learned afterwards, had been employed to keep an eye on him throughout. The American, who had made Blayney's acquaintance soon after his arrival, and had shown himself very obliging, among other places took the General one day to visit the Military Hospital, where he found, in addition to French

officers, a number of wounded British officers of Wellington's regiments in Spain, who had somehow got into French hands and been sent across the frontier.

"One night," relates the General, when speaking of some of his gaieties, "I went to a masquerade or *bal masqué*, dressed as a Benedictine monk. I enjoyed myself so much," he tells us, "and the scene was altogether so novel, that I quite forgot the gravity of my character, and was soon discovered to be *un Anglais*. My fellow-officers also, who were all present, were soon known, and we were obliged to accept numberless invitations to drink champagne-punch from our French acquaintances. Changing his dress during the evening for that of a jovial miller—the cost of hiring a costume, says Lord Blayney, was only thirty sous—he rejoined the revellers and had a lively time until five in the morning, when he retired with "a sufficiency of pleasing recollections to last me a twelvemonth." So he went on from day to day, being invited out to dinner parties and balls, and treated, as he says, as quite the "lion" of the place; until, as before at Madrid, his superabundant energy attracted the attention of the authorities, and he was pulled up short. The *Adjudant de Place*, a Polish officer, with a blunt manner that Lord Blayney did not like, called at his rooms one morning and gave him orders to leave Bordeaux within twenty-four hours.

Such short notice, however, did not at all suit Lord Blayney's convenience, and he went off at once to see the French General in command, to arrange, if possible, for an extension of his stay. The interview resulted in the gay Irishman's getting round the Governor by means of a stroke of amusing diplomacy.

As he entered the room, relates Lord Blayney, the General began by finding fault with him for staying so long in Bordeaux. "That's a pretty dog you have there, Sir!" interposed Blayney in reply, and interrupting the General. The dog, which was lying on the hearth-rug before the fire, happened to be a special pet of the French

General's, and that officer, allowing himself to be put off his guard, paused in his censure and began to talk about the dog. Carried away then by more of Blayney's Irish blarney in praise of the dog, the French General let his attention be diverted entirely from the business in hand. "Come outside and see my horses," said he next, and he forthwith carried Blayney round to his stables. There the astute Irishman professed to admire everything immensely, and even got on the back of one of the General's horses and showed off its paces, making the horse curvet and prance about the yard before the eyes of its delighted owner. "When we went back," remarks Lord Blayney, "nothing more was said of my leaving Bordeaux, and we parted good friends."

But, all the same, the end of Blayney's time was near at hand. Three days later the Governor sent for him to tell him that he had had a letter from Paris complaining of Lord Blayney's delay on the road, and describing him as "a dangerous character." He must really leave Bordeaux at once. Otherwise, added the French General, he would lose the privilege of his parole, and have to be sent off under the escort of gendarmes. The dog was not in the room to save the situation that time; though, even then, Lord Blayney, loth to leave his pleasant surroundings for a cold journey north, while expatiating on the bruises he had received when made a prisoner, and various personal hardships of his journey through Spain, contrived to talk the General round until he obtained leave to stay at Bordeaux for a week longer. After that, however, he had to go, starting off, as before, by himself with his bâtman and baggage on February 20.

On his way, on the second day of his ride, relates Blayney, he overtook half a dozen of his own former officers, also on parole by themselves, who were making their way north on foot. They had spent all their money at Bordeaux, they explained, and had only on them their French prisoners' allowances of fifty sous each, the pay

per *étape*, or day's march; on which sum they proposed to tramp all the way to Verdun, 440 miles off. "They were very cheerful, although they had only a *petit écu* between them (about half a crown), which they were going to make last them until they got to Angoulême, twenty leagues off." To make their daily allowance last out they proposed, as they told Lord Blayney, walking two or three *étapes* a day, thus doubling or trebling their "daily receipt." Although Blayney's purse, as he puts it, "was low," he was able to set the party up in funds to some extent, after which they parted, the officers' *feuilles de route*, or officially prescribed itineraries, taking them in a different direction from that laid down for the General.

On his way Lord Blayney stopped at one village to witness the carnival, and at another was invited by the local landowner to dine and sleep at his château.

Along the road at one place he overtook a large military convoy of Spanish prisoners, soldiers taken in battle, "being driven along by gendarmes." The unfortunate fellows, describes Lord Blayney, "were in a most miserable condition, and treated with the utmost brutality by their escort. Their shoes, which had been originally only a leather sandal fastened to the foot with a thong, were worn out, and their feet dreadfully lacerated. In this condition, half starved and dead with fatigue, they were goaded on by the gendarmes, who had orders to shoot those who should lag behind; and numbers of them were actually thus murdered in cold blood." "While France exists as a nation, the barbarous treatment of the Spanish prisoners must remain a stain on its character," is Lord Blayney's comment.

At Périgaux he stopped to witness an execution; the guillotining of four French *émigrés*, all men of good family, who had been condemned for highway robbery. They had fled to America during the Reign of Terror, and had returned to France in virtue of Napoleon's amnesty to *émigrés* in general, to find their ancestral property confis-

cated and themselves paupers. In despair they had taken to highway robbery, finally waylaying a van laden with specie for the troops in Spain, which act of brigandage had led to their being hounded down and captured.

"The guillotine," says Lord Blayney, describing the scene as he witnessed it over the heads of the crowd from the windows of a tobacconist's shop, "was erected in a little *place* opposite the Hôtel de Ville. The executioner wore a grey frieze waistcoat and pantaloons, a white night-cap covered his head, and his shirt-sleeves were tucked up like those of a butcher going to slaughter an animal. The victims were attended by two priests, and after a short time spent in prayer, they were brought forward towards the fatal instrument. La Roque (the principal of the *émigrés*), who suffered first, went through the terrible preparation without showing the smallest emotion; and his head being severed from his body, the executioner held it up, streaming with blood, and said something which I could not distinctly hear, but which I suppose designated the crime. The guillotine did not perform its office so well on the second victim, for the head remained attached by the skin, and the executioner separated it with a long knife prepared for the purpose. The two others saw their comrades suffer without their countenances betraying any signs of fear."

The terrible scene, we are told, gave Lord Blayney a bad night. "In the night guillotines and headless trunks flitted before my eyes!"

Next day the General took his usual walk round the town sight-seeing, after which he enjoyed "an excellent dinner of turkey stuffed with truffles, for which Périgaux is celebrated, and a bottle of excellent old Madeira."

Thence Lord Blayney took his way by Angoulême until he reached the great Paris road from the south. He stopped for a day at Poictiers to visit the historic battlefield, a mile and a half from the city. Proceeding by way

of Châtellerault and Beauvais, he made another halt at Tours, where he met several English *détenus* allowed to live in that part of France for their health. At Tours he met one of the few French officers of rank who behaved discourteously to him. According to his custom, on arrival, he paid a complimentary visit to the Commandant of the garrison. One of his *détenu* friends accompanied him. They were ushered into the private room of General Bonnard, "who," says Lord Blayney, "we found writing in his office, and who had not the civility to notice us, but continued to write; or at least seemed to do so, for from his vulgar appearance one might doubt whether he could write or not." All the General did was to look up suddenly and order his aide-de-camp to take the dog which Blayney's friend had brought with him out of the room. Then, "the surly ill-conditioned fellow" went on writing. Lord Blayney with his friend turned away on that to leave the room. As they stalked off the General rose and asked them what they wanted In answer Blayney said, in as off-hand a manner as he could assume, that he had only called to pay a visit of civility. General Bonnard muttered something in response, but Lord Blayney cut him short with a formal bow, and then walked straight out of the room. To avoid more unpleasantness at the hands of the General, he left Tours at once.

At Amboise, where he spent the next day, Lord Blayney visited the old castle to see a curiosity, the historic Oubliette, formerly used for punishing criminals in the time of Louis XI. "It is a well," to quote Blayney's description of it, "forty feet in diameter and about one hundred feet deep. Wooden rollers were placed across it at certain distances, turned round by machinery, and to which were fixed several two-edged knives. The victim being precipitated into the abyss, and falling from one roller to another, was minced to pieces before he reached the bottom. As this punishment was always inflicted

secretly, and the victim never more heard of, it received the appropriate name of "les Oubliettes."

At Blois Lord Blayney witnessed the ceremony of the public drawing for the conscription. "In order to drown sorrow," he remarks, "those who were to ballot had recourse to the wine-bottle, and were playing a variety of games. This appears to be greatly encouraged by the magistrates in order to prevent the discontent that results from the abhorred measure. Lord Blayney makes mention also of some pitiful scenes he witnessed at Blois, and elsewhere afterwards, on similar occasions; the lamentation and weeping of the old people, the fathers and mothers, and the wives and sisters of the conscripts, and he also tells how many of the young fellows cut off their thumbs and mutilated themselves for life to avoid being made to go and fight.

Speaking of the terrible drain of the Napoleonic Wars on the manhood of France, Lord Blayney says this also, from what he saw on his way through the country. "The scarcity of men forcibly strikes the stranger travelling in France. In the villages of one hundred houses I have never been able to count above half a dozen old men, and scarce a youth is seen in the country. The greatest share of field labour falls on the women, who, when they have infants, bandage them up like Egyptian mummies and set them down in a corner of the field to squall their lungs away, while the mothers follow the plough or turn up the ground with a spade. At the post-houses, the duty of the ostler is usually performed by females, and the attendants at the *auberges* are invariably strapping wenches, whose loquacity and familiarity are equally tiresome and obtrusive.

At Chambord, Lord Blayney had one of his unpleasant experiences. While at his dinner at an inn the Deputy Mayor of the place, accompanied by a gendarme, suddenly burst in on him. The Deputy Mayor without more ado declared Lord Blayney under arrest as a "danger to the

State." He would have, declared the Mayor angrily, to go to prison forthwith, as his account of himself on arrival was unsatisfactory. Lord Blayney met the intrusion by laughing at the matter, and asking the Deputy Mayor and the gendarme to sit down and have a glass of wine with him. At the same time he produced his travelling passport, or *feuille de route*, explaining that it was quite in order. It named, he pointed out, a certain day for his arrival at Verdun depôt, and directed that he was not to be molested on his journey, and to receive every facility from the local authorities. The Deputy Mayor, however, was not to be placated, and an angry scene followed, Lord Blayney, for his part, threatening to bring the matter to the notice of the Minister of War, which, he pointed out, would entail serious consequences for the Deputy Mayor. He had though, in the end, to submit to *force majeure*, and was conducted back to Blois escorted ignominiously by the Deputy Mayor and the gendarme. In the town, however, the *contretemps* ended with satisfaction to Lord Blayney, after an interview with the Commandant of the garrison and the Mayor of Blois. The Mayor, indeed, was most profuse in his apologies, as Lord Blayney relates, "telling me with many bows that my *air distingué* ought to have been sufficient passport, and I must excuse the ignorance of village magistrates."

At Orleans, at the end of the next stage of his route, he had again some trouble with an over-zealous Commissary of Police, who pounced down on Lord Blayney at his inn, "accompanied by a corporal, four soldiers, and three gendarmes," and carried off Lord Blayney's English soldier-servant to prison on the plea that the man's name was not entered on the *feuille de route*. They treated the servant very brutally, tied his hands behind him, and marched him off through the crowded streets to the city prison. The General's bâtman, however, was released after a couple of hours detention through Lord Blayney's protests to the Mayor of Orleans, the

Police Commissary getting a severe reprimand for "want of judgment."

During the three days that Lord Blayney spent at Orleans he went about without further annoyance, and was enabled to witness the grand fêtes given in honour of the birth of Napoleon's son by Marie Louise, the "King of Rome," which was publicly announced on March 24, on the arrival of a courier from Paris with the news. The whole city, Lord Blayney relates, went mad with excitement, the shops being shut and the houses decorated, while military bands played at the street corners, and dancing went on in the squares all day, a municipal banquet and ball, with illuminations and fireworks, winding up the night.

On April 1 Lord Blayney left Orleans, and two days later he entered Paris—some six months after his being captured in the south of Spain. He had been clever enough to spin out to that time his journey towards his place of captivity, a matter of less than three months for ordinary prisoners of war. And he was not yet at Verdun. He entered Paris, as he tells, in the most matter of fact way, calmly passed the barrier, apparently without challenge, and after a ride along the Boulevards at his leisure, quietly found lodgings for himself at one of the best hotels in Paris, the Hôtel de Richelieu in the Rue de Helder.

As a matter of policy he called next morning at the offices of the *État Major* of the Minister of War, and saw the Secretary to the Minister, "who very politely said he saw no reason to suppose that I would meet with *désagrémens* if I stayed a few days, although no permission had been accorded me for the purpose." Taking prompt advantage of the freedom allowed him, Lord Blayney set out forthwith to enjoy himself in Paris.

He visited the Tuileries and the Luxembourg, enjoyed himself at the Palais Royal, went to see the animals in the Jardin des Plantes, and inspected Napoleon's great column

of the Grand Army erected in honour of Austerlitz, with melted down metal of the captured Austrian cannon. Between whiles he treated himself to *recherché* dinners at Véry's, the fashionable *café* of Napoleonic Paris, followed by pleasant evenings at the opera. So he passed the time very agreeably for a week, paying calls also to certain of the few English *détenus* allowed by special exemption to reside in Paris, and also attending the *salons* of leading ladies of fashion, where he renewed acquaintanceship with friends of former times. Lord Blayney knew his way about Paris well, having previously spent some time there as one of the crowd of English visitors of social distinction who thronged *la ville lumière* during the lively months immediately after the peace of Amiens. On one evening also he attended a grand dinner-party at the *Salon des Étrangers*, where he was introduced to "several Ministers of State and high personages." After that dinner he spent half the night in the *salon de jeu*, playing *Rouge et Noir*, and, for a change this time, losing 300 louis d'or. That was on his last night of liberty in Paris, as the event proved.

As had happened elsewhere, the British General's social activities drew on Lord Blayney the suspicious attention of the authorities. Next morning early once more an *Adjudant de Place* came to see him, appearing at the Hôtel de Richelieu, accompanied by an escort of soldiers, to hale Lord Blayney off before the General commanding the garrison of the capital—General Hulin, Governor of Paris.

The consequences were exceptionally unpleasant for Lord Blayney.

"The Adjutant," as he describes, "entered my room with two of his myrmidons and demanded, with all the insolent airs of office, what brought me to, and what detained me at, Paris? He added that 'if I could not give a good account of myself to the General I must expect the most serious consequences.' While I was

huddling on my clothes, he exclaimed every moment: 'Allons f——, ce n'est pas le temps de faire la toilette!' I was therefore obliged to march off with my coat and waistcoat on my arm, and to tie my neckcloth in the street, through which I was hurried by these ruffians as if I had been a criminal. They first conducted me to the Hotel of Compte Hulin, Governor of Paris, who ordered me to be transferred to the office of his État Major, there to be strictly examined, and a report made to him. The questions put to me were of such a nature that it might have appeared that they suspected me of some heinous plot against the State. At first their language was most menacing and imperious; but finding I would confess nothing, having, indeed, nothing to confess, their tone softened."

The mention of a name of a certain *Parisienne* friend, a lady with influence in high quarters, as Lord Blayney goes on to say, "caused the *Adjudant de Place*, who was my chief examiner, to reflect." After that the French officials supplied Lord Blayney with writing materials, giving him leave to write and inform any of his friends of his arrest. He was detained meanwhile in the room of the *Adjudant de Place*. Lord Blayney's French friends did not apparently reply promptly; but one of the English *détenus* permitted to reside in Paris, Sir John Coghill, did. Sir John came to see him at once, and after a short talk hastened off to try and get an audience of Savary, Duke of Rovigo, Napoleon's then Minister of Police.

After Sir John Coghill had left on his friendly errand an English visitor of another kind, who had accidentally heard of Lord Blayney's arrest, paid him a call. This time the visit caused Blayney some embarrassment. The person was a British naval officer, a Lieutenant Owen, who was temporarily in Paris under special police surveillance, "being allowed out of his lodgings for only two hours a day," as Blayney remarks. Lieutenant Owen, the General says, had been brought to the capital

pending certain investigations, it being suspected that, while on parole at Verdun, he had been in secret correspondence with certain Swiss officers, plotting to corrupt the men of one of Napoleon's Swiss regiments garrisoning Belleisle in the Bay of Biscay. Owen, says Lord Blayney, had called twice on him during the previous day to ask advice about his own position. That was the last kind of visitor that Lord Blayney in the circumstances of the hour wanted to see. On the Lieutenant's coming to see him again now, Blayney, anxious for his own safety, warned the unfortunate fellow off. "I begged him not to come and see me again, as I could not help him and his visiting me might have bad consequences for both."

While talking to the *Adjudant de Place* during his hours of waiting, Lord Blayney, in reply to a question he put to that officer, was told that his name had been for some time on the books of the Police Office, having been placed there, the *Adjudant de Place* understood, in consequence of certain information which had been received from General Beliard at Madrid. All the time apparently, as Blayney remarks, the *Adjudant de Place* was very nervous lest he should try and escape by bolting from the room. "When I once, in walking up and down the room approached the door, he cried out, 'Gardez bien ce Monsieur la!' and I was prevented from again going near the door."

For his own part, Lord Blayney's nerves, naturally enough, were in a high state of tension all the afternoon over his possible destination. He fully expected, he says, to be sent to the Temple prison; of very evil reputation at that day for the tragedies that had taken place there.

Lord Blayney's case though, in the outcome, was not considered sufficiently serious to warrant incarceration in Paris. The affair was allowed to terminate with the temporary suspension of the privileges of his parole and

his being ordered to resume his journey to Verdun forthwith, under arrest, escorted by a gendarme.

He was sent off early next morning in a chaise with his custodian seated by his side, and after a week's travelling under restrictions that Lord Blayney found very unpleasant, reached his destination. He had to submit to the annoyance of having the gendarme at table with him, paying for all the man ate and drank; and at the inns where they stopped for the night, to Lord Blayney's utter disgust, the man slept in a bed in the same room. In that manner the General at length got to Verdun on April 14, 1811.

Immediately on his arrival at Verdun the British General was taken by his gendarme custodian before the Governor of the fortress, as Lord Blayney himself describes:

"On entering the town I was conducted to the citadel and before the Commandant, a Colonel Courcelles, whose appearance was not calculated to do away the unfavourable account I had heard of him. A red woollen cap and a grey frieze jacket and pantaloons constituted his dress, and he filled the room with a cloud of smoke from a great pipe. He was, however, civil, and when the clerks had, according to the Verdun expression, 'drawn my picture,' that is, taken down my description, age, the place of my birth, and my father and mother's names, and having signed a parole not to quit the town without permission, I was allowed to retire at perfect liberty."

Speaking in general terms of his first impressions of life among the Verdun prisoners, as it was in the time of Courcelles' Governorship, General Blayney says this:

"As the depôt is solely appropriated to those on parole, each has a passport which permits him to walk or ride in every direction, two leagues from the town, between the opening of the gates at daylight and their shutting at dusk. Field officers and naval captains sign

a public register once a month; all other commissioned officers every fifth day, and every other prisoner (except by particular indulgence) every day. All general convivial meetings of prisoners must be sanctioned by the Commandant, and as this has never been refused, the Anniversaries of His Majesty's birth, and of St. Patrick have been always celebrated at Verdun with as much loyalty and devotion as in the capital of the British Kingdom.

"Some time after my arrival Monsieur Courcelles was superseded in the command of the depôt, in consequence of the complaints of the prisoners, particularly the midshipmen, who (without the slightest cause except his villainous caprice) he confined in the citadel where they were subject to every kind of ill-treatment and extortion."

Lord Blayney goes on with "an endeavour to paint the old system as it was described to me by persons resident in the depôt since its first establishment."

"The first Commandant," he says, "was General Roussel, who treated the prisoners in the best manner; but in a few months he was replaced by General Wirion, as great a rogue as the Revolution has produced. Under him everything was venial and the prisoners of all ranks were plundered, both by himself and his underlings in every possible manner.

"From those whom he knew possessed fortunes he extorted immense sums as the price of indulgences he granted them; or of refraining from sending them to Bitche, which he had the power to do without assigning any cause. More than once a number of the most quiet persons in the depôt have been dragged from their beds and marched off to that infernal cavern without having the slightest knowledge of the reason; and many of them, after suffering two years of the most complicated misery in its dungeons, when they returned to Verdun were still quite ignorant of the motives of their arrest."

Mentioning the case of a Post-Captain, the Commander of the frigate *Blanche*, wrecked off Ushant in March, 1807, Lord Blayney adds this:

"Sir T. Lavie, the senior naval officer, was dragged out of his bed and hurried off to the fortress of Montmédy, where he was kept closely confined as a State prisoner for some months, and not allowed the use of paper, pen, or ink."

"One instance," proceeds the General, "will be sufficient to give an idea of General Wirion's character. A number of English gentlemen of good fortune frequently invited him to dinner, and allowed him to win their money as a certain way of keeping on good terms with him. One of these gentleman, however, had offended unknowingly, and Wirion destined him to Bitche, but receiving an invitation to dine with him, he accepted and appeared to be on the very best terms with his host. The Englishman was not a little astonished to find, when the General retired towards morning, two gendarmes enter and tell him he had only till daylight to prepare himself to march for that place.

"The system of extortion of the Lieutenant of Gendarmes, who was second in command, and of the non-commissioned officers of that corps, were regularly organized. At this time every prisoner without distinction was obliged to sign twice a day; and, by another regulation of the General's, if they neglected to do so, they were obliged to pay three francs to the gendarme who went to visit them. It was soon found that this measure brought in but little, as none but persons of fortune could afford to pay a crown a day for the liberty of sleeping in the morning and riding out in the afternoon. Hence the system was changed, and for six or twelve francs a month a tacit permission was granted to forget these frequent signatures.

"The masters of the merchantmen, by far the greater number of whom were in a state of the greatest distress,

did not escape the grasp of these harpies. By the regulations they were obliged to live ten in a house, to be mutually responsible for each other, body for body; and besides were mustered twice a day. In order to be freed from the effect of these regulations, they were forced to pay the gendarmes whatever they could scrape together.

"Besides this open and general system, the gendarmes had another efficient method of raising contributions: by lotteries for horses, watches, trinkets, etc., that often had no existence, or if they had it made no difference, the winner being well assured that the consequence of insisting on receiving the object would be a visit to Bitche, as was the fate of a gentleman who won a horse in this manner from the Lieutenant of Gendarmerie, and did not choose to say, as half a dozen others had, 'Monsieur, je vous prie de la garder comme une souvenir de l'amitié.'"

"Some of the prisoners forwarded written protests at their ill-treatment to Marshal Berthier, the Minister of War in Paris from 1803 to 1810, but no redress was forthcoming. Wirion was a protégé of Berthier's, and Berthier destroyed or pigeon-holed the complaints. His successor, however, called Wirion to account.

"On General Clarke being appointed Head of the Department in Berthier's place, the prisoners renewed their complaints against Wirion, and he was called on to explain his conduct, and went to Paris. Apparently a public inquiry was ordered, and he shot himself in the Bois de Boulogne. His Lieutenant of Gendarmerie and Second were reduced to the ranks."

"Courcelles, who succeeded Wirion, had been up to then *Commandant de Place* at Verdun. Under his rule open extortion ceased, but the system of picking by underhand means was continued. One method employed was by tampering with the prisoners' allowances. Under Wirion the monthly payment to the prisoners was always in *livres tournois*, instead of, according to the ordinary reckoning, in francs, by which means the officials put

1¼ per cent. of the money supplied for the payments into their own pockets, eighty francs being equivalent to eighty-one livres, or fifteen louis, a month. Courcelles continued the system, and added a new method of illegitimate plunder, which in its working fell almost entirely on the midshipmen.

"On pretence of some desertions among this class," relates Lord Blayney, "he caused the whole of them to be arrested and closely confined in an old convent of the citadel. They were obliged to pay thirty sous a month each for the lights kept burning by their guards, besides being charged most enormously for every dilapidation. The whole product of both these taxes went into the pocket of Courcelles and his *affidés*, for the lights were allowed by the Government, and the dilapidations were never made good. Upon a moderate average these two objects produced twenty louis a month.

"But the third and grand regulation was the wine. Courcelles having a vineyard near Verdun which produced a *vin de pays*, worth about six sous a bottle, he obliged the persons confined in the citadel to purchase the wine at fifteen sous from his natural son, whom he had appointed turnkey at one of the dungeons. From an accurate calculation the profits arising from this monopoly amounted to forty-five louis a month, making in the whole eighty louis.

"But independent of these extortions, the midshipmen were treated with the most brutal inhumanity, and on the slightest murmur were thrown into a dungeon called the 'Tour d'Angoulême,' being a round tower with only two apartments, in which the Duc d'Angoulême had been confined.*

* It was in the Tour d'Angoulême that General Wirion confined midshipmen whom he bore a grudge against. He kept one set shut up there for ten months. The lads, we are told, instituted an "Order" among themselves of "The Knights of the Round Tower," and for years after their release they used to meet and celebrate the day of their liberation by a dinner, "at which each member wore the ribbon of the Order."

"At length the midshipmen, seeing no prospect of any remission of their sufferings, detailed them in a letter to the Minister of War, which produced an inquiry into the conduct of Courcelles, and although he had been too cautious to allow any proof of his sharing in the plunder to be brought home to him, and threw the whole burden on the shoulders of the Lieutenant of Gendarmerie, his conduct was evidently disapproved of by his being immediately removed both from the command of the depôt and from the situation of *Commandant de Place*. With respect to his cat's-paw, the Lieutenant of Gendarmerie, he followed Wirion's example, giving himself a quietus with a pistol on the *glacis*."

There was another phase of life at Verdun—of which mention has been made—to which General Blayney refers:

"Among the prisoners at the depôt at first were two sets—*détenus*, or hostages, and prisoners of war. Among the former were many respectable families seized in 1803, but also there were debtors who had given the King's Bench the slip, and on the Continent were living by their wits; and also many traders, tailors, bootmakers, and *traiteurs*.

"The *traiteurs* in particular, during the first years of the depôt, made fortunes by the epicureanism of the *détenus*. In their shops were to be found the most delicate and expensive viands from the most distant provinces of the Empire: the celebrated *pâtés de foie gras*, the *poularde aux truffles* of Paris, the oysters of Concale, the turbot and cod of the North Sea, and the tunny-fish of the Mediterranean. The prices of these delicacies was enormous, the *poularde* costing two louis, and turbot and cod four francs the pound, but prices were never considered, for, as Verdun was then full of accommodating Jews who lent money on personal security at 100 per cent. interest, it was by no means difficult to raise the wind. Hence, in many instances, there was but little difference in the style of living of the *détenus* of the first fortune, the midshipmen of the navy, and the bankrupt blackleg.

"At this period Verdun had a *Pharo* Bank and a *Rouge et Noir* table, to which every description of persons were admitted, where perfect equality reigned, and where our countrymen of the first rank might be seen seated alongside a ragged Jew, a mud-covered peasant, or a *fille publique*. Here a great number of young men were completely ruined, it being supposed that while it continued, £50,000 were lost by the prisoners every year. It was at last shut up in consequence of a general regulation limiting the numbers of licensed gaming-houses."

"Gaming disputes," remarks the General, "led to many duels, and several lives were so lost."

Taking advantage of a responsible officer of General's rank being among the prisoners of war at Verdun, the War Office in London—just as the Admiralty had previously done in the case of Captain Brenton—obtained the sanction of the French Ministry of War for Lord Blayney to make arrangements for the relief of the poorer prisoners; funds being forwarded to him from the British Treasury for the purpose. Lord Blayney himself apparently induced the War Office authorities to move in the matter, by immediately on his arrival at Verdun setting on foot an inquiry as to the clothing and health of the prisoners. He represented their sufferings to the British Government, and was empowered to arrange for a supply of better food and proper clothing, which greatly improved their state, his action—"doing away with one great inducement to desertions, and saving several lives in the inclement winter."

Lord Blayney's good work was, however, interfered with and put a stop to by the French authorities, through measures that were taken towards himself.

This is how he describes what befell him:

"At seven one morning my house was surrounded by guards, and every avenue of escape was secured. The General officer commanding the Department then entered my bedroom, in which I was dressing, and addressing me

very politely informed me His Majesty had received certain information of my being in possession of papers of consequence which he (the French General) was ordered to seize and forward to Paris. In consequence, my writing-desk, etc., were soon emptied, and the whole of the private letters and manuscripts they found were carried off to be examined. Among other papers of equally little importance were some drawings of the country and a few rough sketches of imaginary fortifications.

"At sight of these," remarks Lord Blayney, "the General thought he had caught me; but being unable to make anything of them, he said: 'Certainly you have taken plans of the neighbouring country!' To that I replied: 'Surely, Monsieur le Général, you cannot think I would throw away my time in secretly stealing plans which I can buy in any bookseller's shop for a few francs; and infinitely more accurate than it would be possible for me to make them.'

"He then said: 'But you have written disrespectfully of His Majesty the Emperor!' In answer to that I observed that he was in possession of my papers, and would most probably find on perusing them that I never gave myself a thought about his Emperor; but that if he should happen to find him mentioned, he would be pleased to consider that I was a British officer, by whom His Majesty could not in reason expect to be paid compliments!

"My papers, after being six weeks in Paris, were returned to me with a polite note from the Duc de Feltre, Minister of War, to the Commandant of the depôt, expressing his sorrow for the trouble occasioned me on this subject."

The then Governor of Verdun, it should be said, was the officer who had succeeded Wirion and Courcelles, the Baron de Beauchêne, a courteous gentleman and a kind and humane gaoler to his captives. as has earlier been told at some length.

But there was more in store for the General. Lord Blayney had yet to undergo a further experience of what it meant to be in the grip of Napoleon as a prisoner of war.

"Not long afterwards I was visited one morning by the Lieutenant of Gendarmerie, who notified the Commandant's desire to see me immediately. On my arrival this officer expressed his concern at the very unpleasant duty imposed on him, in being obliged to inform me that I was a close prisoner by order of the Emperor. He then read a letter from the Minister of War explaining the cause."

The letter (dated March 6, 1813) stated that the British Government had arrested and thrown into prison the French General Simon, one of Wellington's captives, on parole in England, and in retaliation Lord Blayney was to be arrested forthwith and detained in the citadel of Verdun. Also he was informed that he would answer with his head for whatever the British Government might do to General Simon.* In high indignation at his treatment, General Blayney wrote off a letter of protest to England, to Lord Liverpool, the Foreign Minister, requesting that steps should be taken at once to relieve him from his position.

To resume with Lord Blayney's personal narrative :—

"From the General I was conducted to the Convent of St. Vannes in the citadel, where a small room, about fourteen feet square, was allotted me, the window of which was strongly barred. Two gendarmes were placed in a little passage leading to the room, each of whom I was obliged to pay for guarding me. The Commandant was, however, so kind as to permit me to take the air within the citadel during the day, at which times a gendarme always kept a few paces behind me. During the night, however, I was grievously tormented by these myrmidons, for, as they kept watch alternately for an hour, each one,

* See *ante*, p. 171.

whenever it was his turn to mount, opening my door and politely inquiring if I wanted anything. So strict were their orders to take care of me that, not content with this hourly intrusion, they would often repeat the same kind inquiry in the intervals; so that during the whole time I remained here I scarcely got one hour's continued rest!

"In this close confinement I remained for seven weeks, as a hostage to deter the English Government from punishing a French General officer who had not only broken his parole, but had also laid plans for arming and raising the French prisoners in England, which, according to the laws of war, subjected him to the punishment of a spy. When I was at length set at liberty, it was without the slightest expression of concern that such harsh measures had been necessary—a species of apology I had a right to expect at least!

"During my confinement," adds Lord Blayney, "I feared nothing so much as being removed to Bitche, of which place I had received such accounts as left scarce a doubt of death being preferable."*

After his release General Blayney was left undisturbed by the authorities, and his former harmonious relations with the Baron de Beauchêne were resumed. They were unimpaired by what had happened. Then, to the general and genuine sorrow of all the Verdun prisoners, the courteous and kindly French Commandant died—in the spring of 1813. The Governor's funeral, as Lord Blayney relates, "was attended by every Englishman in the depôt whose goodwill he had gained by his honourable treatment, so different from that of Wirion and Courcelles."

His successor again proved an officer of the same stamp, and under his rule also various diversions that might serve to ameliorate the lot of the prisoners were continued. Horse-racing was one.

After his release from confinement in the autumn of

* See Lieutenant James's narrative with regard to what certain of the Verdun prisoners thought of Lord Blayney (pp. 171-2).

1812, Lord Blayney, for one thing, had been allowed to revive the race meetings, held in a meadow just outside the walls of the fortress, which, as has also been related, had been an occasional diversion among the prisoners in the earlier days of captivity. "In order," says Blayney, "to enliven the sameness and *ennui* which pervaded the depôt, I had some horses on the turf, and our races were established." The meetings soon became popular, as affording opportunities for pleasant social gatherings among the French officers and families of the garrison, as well as, we are told, "of the first French families of the Department."

Among the officers under detention at Verdun, indeed, the keenest interest soon got to be taken in the races—in regard to which General Blayney tells, among others, this story:

"The schemes planned to discover the speed of the various horses by trial, without being discovered, were curious. I once saw a friend of mine up to his middle in the river, with a Frenchman's coat and cocked hat on, and a fishing-rod in one hand, while in the other he held a stop-watch to ascertain the fleetness of the horse going round the course. It is probable that these *ruses de guerre*," adds the General, "would not be deemed admissible at Newmarket, but at Verdun the humour rendered them merely laughable, and as they were practised by each side, they were treated as quite fair, and none had a right to complain."

Lord Blayney remained a prisoner of war in France until the cessation of hostilities in April, 1814. Promoted Lieutenant-General in 1819, his health broke down not long afterwards, and he went on the Retired List. He died in April, 1834, and was succeeded by his only son, at whose death without issue in 1874 the Blayney peerage became extinct.

COURSES DE VERDUN,

DU 15 JUIN 1812.

Hon.ble H. TUFTON, . . } Commissaires.
Lieut.t ARMSTRONG, . . }

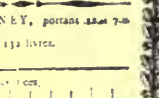
ORDRE DES COURSES.

I.re COURSES commenceront à une heure précise.

L'on sonnera la Clochette un quart d'heure d'avance pour faire seller les Chevaux. Si les Ecuyers ne se trouvent pas à cheval à l'endroit du départ, à l'heure indiquée, Messieurs les Commissaires sont autorisés à faire courir ceux qui se seront présentés.

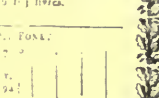
[illegible] de M. Milord BLAYNEY, portant [illegible] Contre
[illegible] de M. le Général COX, portant [illegible] livres.
[illegible] pour deux cents Louis.

[illegible] de tout [illegible] deux fois le tour de la Course en parties liées.
1. Le Cheval [illegible] nommé SANS PEUR, de M. SHIPLEY, portant [illegible]
2. La Jument [illegible] nommée FILLY, de Milord BLAYNEY, portant [illegible]
3. La Jument [illegible] nommée BIQUETTE, de M. MAY portant [illegible]
4. La Jument [illegible] nommée MINETTE, de M. le Chevalier SHERIDAN [illegible]
5. La Jument [illegible] nommée ZANGARA, de M. le Chevalier DIXON, portant [illegible]



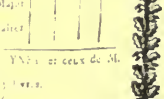
[illegible] de Milord BLAYNEY, portant [illegible] ou 107 l. Contre
[illegible] de M. BUTLER, [illegible] livres.
[illegible] pour [illegible]

[illegible] une fois le tour, en parties liées. [illegible] FONEY.
[illegible] portant [illegible]
[illegible] de M. SHOLTO, portant [illegible] ou 107 l.
[illegible] nommée LIVELY, de Milord BLAYNEY, portant [illegible]



[illegible] de M. Milord BLAYNEY, portant [illegible] Contre
[illegible] de M. le Général COX, portant [illegible] livres.
[illegible] pour [illegible]

[illegible] deux fois le tour en parties liées.
[illegible] nommé TRAVERSE [illegible] Colonel
[illegible] portant [illegible]
[illegible] de M. [illegible] Major
FOLLETTA-NAM, portant [illegible]
[illegible] de M. [illegible] Capitaine
[illegible] de M. [illegible] Chevalier



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Milord BLAYNEY. { La Jument [illegible] nommée [illegible]
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Les Ordres sont donnés de tuer tous les Chiens qui se trouveront sur le terrain fixé pour la Course, vu qu'ils occasionnent la sureté des Joquets.

Les Messieurs sont instamment priés de ne pas passer, avec leurs Voitures, sur le terrain limité pour les Courses.

W.m DRAKE, *Commis des Courses.*

HOW SOME OF THE PRISONERS ESCAPED

IT was after the negotiations for peace in 1806 broke down that the attempts at escape among the British prisoners became frequent, and began to cause serious trouble to the French authorities at the different depôts. Before that the attempts had been comparatively few. Henceforward, as time passed, with no end to their captivity in sight, the prisoners at Verdun and elsewhere became more and more reckless in their endeavours to get free, and their breakings out more numerous.

In 1812 the *Moniteur* published a list, with names, of no fewer than 355 British prisoners, naval and military officers and men, as well as *détenus*, who had disappeared from their places of confinement and got away to England. How certain of the escapes were carried through will be told in the words of those who effected them.

Some of the officers, we are told, purposely contrived to have their parole revoked for some minor offence before making their escape. Others, after making their arrangements, coolly wrote on the eve of going off to the Commandant of the depôt giving back their parole, and bidding their gaolers good-bye. Some of the prisoners did not take even that formality, justifying their act to themselves as fair retaliation on the score of personal ill-usage and illegalities on the part of their custodians. The greater number of these parole-breakers, it would appear, were among the civilian *détenus* and merchant-ship skippers and mates; the naval and military officers were, as a rule, more scrupulous about deliberately violating their word of honour.

With regard to this matter of parole, indeed, the Court of Inquiry held in England on escaped prisoners reporting themselves had, in the case of officers, always to be satisfied. One escaped officer from Verdun, it is on record, who had broken his parole in flagrantly irregular circumstances, was actually sent back to France by the British Government. He was, it is stated, a Lieutenant Sheehy of the 89th Foot, who made his escape from Verdun in October, 1813. At the personal instance of the Prince Regent, it is stated, he was publicly reprimanded in a memorandum issued by the Commander-in-Chief, and sent back in arrest under flag of truce to Morlaix, where he arrived in March, 1814. It was, as it happened, just at the moment that Napoleon was in the midst of his last desperate effort to rescue Paris, and to attend to the matter was, of course, out of the question. The Lieutenant was detained at Morlaix pending instructions from the Emperor which never came, and within three weeks hostilities were over. Nothing more is on record about him after that; he was not, however, it would appear, allowed to rejoin his regiment.

Among the naval prisoners, Lieutenant George Vernon Jackson, who lived to become an Admiral, attempted four escapes. The first was while he was on his way under guard from Brest to Verdun; and he remained at large in France, with a brother officer, a midshipman, Mr. F. Whitehurst, hidden first at one place, then at another, for the lengthy period of fourteen months. After that he and his companion, getting to the coast near the mouth of the Seine, found means of launching a flat-bottomed boat which they had managed to get hold of, with a sheet for a sail; but their luck now turned against them, and they were seen, chased, and recaptured by local fishermen. Lieutenant Jackson was taken back to Verdun and shut up in the citadel until again, this time with four other prisoners, he contrived to make his escape. Again he was recaptured, the party being pursued and

surrounded on the second day of their flight. Imprisoned now in an underground cell of the Porte Chaussée gaol of Verdun, he made two other attempts to get away, both of which were foiled at the last moment. On the first occasion Lieutenant Jackson's companion fell and broke his thigh, necessitating the abandonment of the attempt; on the second, the clumsiness of another companion gave the alarm to a sentry near by. He was sent, in consequence, to the dungeons of Bitche heavily chained, to escape finally from there with a military friend, Lieutenant l'Estrange, of the 71st Regiment. The two had to separate to avoid capture, Lieutenant Jackson at the last finding a boat near a village on the coast of Normandy, in which he rowed across the channel until he was picked up in a state of complete exhaustion by a British cruiser off Selsey Bill.

A midshipman named Temple escaped by crouching at the far end of a *diligence* under the cover of the petticoats of two women, a French lady friend of his and her servant. Hidden like that he contrived to get all the way to Strasburg, where the French lady, who was a native of the city, managed to get a passport for Temple, and smuggled him across the Rhine. In the end he made his way to Austrian territory and thence to Trieste, where he got on board ship.

Another young fellow, who had acquired a perfect knowledge of French—William Wright was his name—got away from Verdun, and after wandering in France for some time, contrived somehow to get himself appointed interpreter to a French General, General Brabançon, commanding at Havre. Watching his opportunity, he succeeded one night in creeping on board an English vessel which had been sent in with a flag of truce, and hid himself in a large trunk while the vessel, as was customary, was being searched by the police before sailing. Nobody opened the trunk, and, after remaining shut up for an hour, as soon as the ship was at sea, the stowaway made his

appearance, free once more. Two seamen, named Butterfield and Henson, also managed to escape from Verdun and make their way undetected across the whole length of France until near Marseilles. There, however, the pair were stopped, to be sent back to Verdun and forwarded thence for the expiation of their offence to the dungeons of Bitche.

The younger and more active among the *détenus*, who all, it should be said, persistently refused to consider themselves as legitimate prisoners, were no less venturesome in their attempts to escape from Verdun. Some daringly let themselves down by ropes from the ramparts of the fortress, which were seventy feet above the ditch, or got away disguised as peasants, in more than one instance coolly walking out through the gates on market-day. More than one, instead of going towards the coast, put their pursuers off the trail by making for the Rhine, after crossing which it was less difficult to find friends willing to render help. All sorts of devices were resorted to. One *détenu* went for a bathe in the Meuse near Verdun one day and disappeared, leaving his clothes on the river-bank to make it seem as if he had been drowned. He was, however, arrested elsewhere and sent back, when it came out that he had made use of a forged passport, and had bribed some of the neighbouring villagers to help him away. Two young fellows escaped to Strasburg concealed under the letter-bags in a mailcart. One cool lad, Peter Playgrove was his name, escaped with—for companion—a young French friend, the two being disguised as peasants. They boldly took a line for Switzerland. Not having passports, they bought a waggon with a load of hay, and on entering the towns on their road pretended they had just come from a neighbouring village, the name of which they had acquainted themselves with beforehand, and were going into the town to sell their hay. The *octroi* officials seem usually to have satisfied themselves with just sticking a pike into the hay and letting the cart

pass. At the further gate of the town they gave the name of a village on that side, whither they were going home, they said, with a load of newly-purchased hay. In that manner they contrived to make their way to Switzerland, where young Playgrove obtained an authorized passport for Trieste, and thence shipped to Malta.

Two English doctors lowered themselves from the wall of Verdun citadel safely, but could not get across the fortress ditch, and had to give themselves up. A barrister, one of the *détenus*, got out of the citadel in the same manner and over the ditch, only, however, to be arrested at Metz and sent back to Verdun, with consequent committal to the dungeons of Bitche. According to a friend of his: "He endured one of the greatest indignities ever offered to a man in his respectable line of life—the common gendarme who brought him back declared that he had orders to sleep with him in the same bed! Let every gentleman," comments the irate writer, "reflect upon this insult before he sets foot in France!" The restless lawyer, it would appear, schemed to get away from Bitche in turn, but a spy—one of several creatures of the kind who were lodged in disguise among the British prisoners to detect any plans for escape that might be on foot—discovered his project to the Commandant. A search was made, and a rope-ladder being found in the lawyer's trunk, he was placed in the lowermost dungeon, fifty feet under ground. That, as it happens, is the last we hear of him.

For aiding friends to escape very severe penalties were inflicted. A midshipman of the name of Wright, for instance, was sent to Bitche for holding the rope by which a fellow midshipman let himself down from the ramparts of Verdun citadel, as was a *détenu* named Knox who had stood security for a Captain Brown who escaped but was recaptured.

At the Arras and Valenciennes depôts, so numerous were the escapes in the winter of 1806 and the early part

of 1807 that those two depôts were temporarily closed and the prisoners transferred to Verdun. There, on their arrival, General Wirion had the newcomers specially paraded and informed that the first man who should attempt to escape while under his charge would be shot. Wirion, however, did not venture to put his threat into execution. As for the escapes from Valenciennes, there had been over forty in one month: so frequently, indeed, did prisoners disappear at that time, that, as we are told by one of the Verdun *détenus* who heard the story on the arrival of the Valenciennes prisoners, "every morning those who came upon the promenade used to inquire who had escaped during the previous night!" At Verdun, in 1809, owing to the number of escapes among the British prisoners belonging to the mercantile marine, orders were issued for all men under fifty years of age to sleep in the citadel every night during the winter, and they were forbidden also to go outside the town gates during the day.

The escapes of *détenus* were not seldom brought about through the instrumentality of paid agents in the neighbouring villages, on terms arranged by the fugitive's friends at home, the agents, many of whom were Belgians, providing forged passports and providing guides for the journey to the coast, accommodation *en route* being arranged for by means of confederates at different places. Smugglers and fishermen with whom the agents were in league carried the escaped prisoners over to England. A number of these Belgians and some French villagers were prosecuted from time to time, but the traffic went on all the same.

The firing of cannon from the fortress ramparts was the universal signal to notify an escape to the people of the surrounding country, one shot being fired for each escaped prisoner, and there was a standing reward for re-captures at the rate of fifty livres (£2 1s. 8d.) for each man.

Re-capture meant being brought back handcuffed and in fetters, the fugitives being chained together where three or four were re-taken at the same time. At Verdun re-captured prisoners were usually paraded through the streets as a warning to others. The case is on record of one officer, a Lieutenant Leviscourt of the Royal Navy, being paraded through the fortress not only handcuffed, but also with one leg chained to a big cannon-ball, which the unfortunate fellow had to drag along. One of the cannon-balls so used at Verdun, with its chain—"boulets de discipline" they were called—is on view as one of the exhibits in the Army Museum at the Invalides in Paris at the present day.

A naval officer, who spent over eight years at Verdun as a prisoner, was Lieutenant George Sidney Smith of the Royal Navy, a nephew of the celebrated Admiral Sir Sidney Smith, the heroic defender of Acre. Taken prisoner with the ill-fated Captain Wesley Wright—whose fate in the Temple prison in Paris, whether he was murdered or driven to suicide after torture, is to this day an unsolved mystery—while employed on special service of a semi-political nature off the coast of Morbihan in 1804, at the time of the Georges Conspiracy against the life of Napoleon (then First Consul), he was kept at Verdun until the autumn of 1812. Then at length he made his escape. It fell to this officer eighteen months after that, when a Lieutenant of the frigate *Undaunted*, to come into personal contact with Napoleon during his conveyance to Elba; and the *rencontre* was a disagreeable one on both sides. In Fréjus Bay, as the *Undaunted*'s boat was carrying the ex-Emperor out to the ship, Napoleon asked the Captain of the frigate, who was seated by his side, the name of the Lieutenant in charge of the boat. Captain Ussher replied: "Smith; he is the nephew of Sir Sidney Smith." "Sidney Smith! Sir Sidney Smith!" exclaimed Napoleon angrily; and he repeated the name three or four times. Then he

muttered half to himself in a moody tone, "the man who made me miss my destiny." Napoleon remained silent after that for the rest of the row.

On board the *Undaunted*, we are told, during the week's voyage, Napoleon one day took occasion to say a word to Lieutenant Sidney Smith. It was the only time that he spoke to him, although he often spoke to the other officers. Napoleon addressed the Lieutenant rather morosely, opening the conversation by telling him that "he thought very little of Sir Sidney Smith's gunnery at Acre, as he fired very badly!" Lieutenant Smith, a gruff and rather surly tempered officer, with a strong personal antipathy to Napoleon (as he repeatedly told his brother officers during the voyage), from his experiences as a prisoner of war, answered back very tartly. "That, sir," he replied, "is exactly what Sir Sidney has always said of you!" The reply had the effect of making Napoleon turn away sharply.

And apparently he owed the Lieutenant a grudge for it. Every day, we are told, by Napoleon's request one or other of the four Lieutenants of the ship dined at the Captain's table, seated beside Napoleon. Lieutenant Smith took his seat there in turn with the rest, but it was remarked that although the ex-Emperor invariably talked with the other Lieutenants, he never spoke a single word to, or took the slightest notice of, Lieutenant Smith.

Captain Wright's first Lieutenant, James Wallis, who was made prisoner at the same time with Lieutenant Sidney Smith, underwent nine years' captivity at Verdun; until September, 1813, when he, in like manner, made his escape.

Another naval officer, who was at Verdun for a time during 1813, was that splendid fellow and tremendous fighter, Captain Nesbit Willoughby. While on shore on half-pay, in 1812, he went abroad and joined the Russian Army as a volunteer against Napoleon, only,

however, to be taken prisoner in the battle at Polotz, in October, 1812, in consequence of his own act of humanity, having given up his horse to enable a wounded Russian to get safely off the field. As a prisoner Captain Willoughby went through some terrible experiences during the French retreat, "witnessing," we are told, "extraordinary and heart-rending scenes." After that he was ordered off to France on parole, being escorted by a gendarme as far as Mayence. So far he had been treated at least courteously, but from there onwards all was changed. At Mayence, because of his having told people whom he met on the way across Germany of what he had seen of the Moscow disaster, he was summarily deprived of his parole and lodged in the fortress gaol—in the same cell with three Brunswick officers who had been condemned to be shot. Moved on to Metz, he was sent thence in the custody of armed guards to Verdun, and from there, after three months' close detention, to solitary confinement in the dungeons of the Château de Bouillon, where he passed nine months, "daily expecting," as he describes, "the fate of Wesley Wright." He was transferred next to another dungeon in the fortress of Peronne, twelve miles from St. Quentin on the Amiens road, from which place, on the advance of the Allies in March, 1814, he finally made his escape and rejoined the Russians in time to witness the final battle before the gates of Paris.

In regard to the escapes of British prisoners the best known case perhaps is that of Midshipman O'Brien of the *Hussar*, whose adventurous experiences furnished Captain Marryat with some of the most striking incidents of "Peter Simple." O'Brien's personal narrative of his doings and adventures in crossing Europe to the Adriatic was first published in 1814, in a long defunct magazine, the *Naval Chronicle*. The even more romantic and venturesome escapes and experiences of Lieutenant R. B. James, as recorded in his manuscript narrative, have been

related in detail in this book, told at full length, as written down after his final escape while the details were fresh in the Lieutenant's recollection.

Midshipman O'Brien had a part in three attempts to escape.

The first was an effort to undermine one of the dungeons, thirty feet under ground, with hammer and chisels. It was proposed to cut a way through the rock to the outer face, whence the projectors of the enterprise hoped to be able to clamber down over the ramparts and upper fortifications with the aid of a rope made of sheets and string. The scheme, however, failed at the outset. The task of boring a hole through the solid rock with the poor implements at the disposal of the prisoners proved beyond their powers, and it was given up after a short trial.

In the second venture, O'Brien and a party of midshipmen and others, all occupants of the same *souterrain*, were nearly successful. They contrived to burrow a hole through the rock, and creep along it to the subterraneous passage which has been mentioned as leading beneath the fortifications into the open beyond the outworks of the fortress. On their way they forced three barriers in the tunnel that formed the subterraneous passage. One was an iron door, so strongly clamped and barricaded that they had to excavate a hole under it, by means of which one of the party crawled through and then drew the bolts of the door on the further side. Unfortunately, at the third door, which was near the exit at the outer end of the passage, over-eagerness in forcing back the bolt made a noise which was heard by a sentry outside. He gave the alarm, and O'Brien and his companions had to scurry back to their dungeon and try to escape detection by getting into their beds and shamming to be asleep.

The leaders in the attempt, as far as they could be identified—O'Brien, himself, by luck and cool audacity contrived to escape discovery—were treated with atrocious

vindictiveness. They were packed off to Metz, "heavily ironed and bound in chains," to go before a court-martial there, at whose hands they received sentences appalling in their remorseless severity. Five of them were each condemned to fifteen years penal servitude as galley slaves. One was sentenced to ten years. Four others were ordered to the galleys for nine years.

Fear of reprisals in England when news of the trial reached there, however, fortunately for these luckless prisoners, prevented the sentences from being carried out. Napoleon did not venture to confirm them. They were all remitted and the prisoners were sent back to undergo increased rigours at Bitche once more.

It is on record, though, that the monstrous outrage of sending prisoners of war to the galleys was perpetrated in the case of certain British prisoners of lower rank. To take one instance. Two seamen, John Gardner and Henry Hudsell by name, were tried by court-martial: the former for forging a passport for his shipmate, Hudsell for escaping and getting half-way across France by means of the forged passport. They were each sentenced to six years as galley slaves at Toulon, and the sentences were carried out; the forgery of the passport being laid stress on to justify the infliction of the savage penalty.

In O'Brien's third and successful attempt to escape from Bitche, made in September, 1808, nearly a twelve-month after the second attempt, he had three companions: a brother midshipman named Hewson, a dragoon officer in a cavalry regiment of the East India Company's service named Batley, and a surgeon named Barklimore. The four elected boldly to try and let themselves down over the ramparts at night and trust to be able to get away across the outer ditch, and so into the open country beyond, where they proposed to make for the Rhine, cross Bavaria, and get into Austrian territory, finally working their way to the Adriatic.

They secretly made a rope of cloth, obtained ostensibly

for shirts, which was bound round and frapped with twine got in small balls at different times from other prisoners allowed to do work as cobblers for men in the prison. The rope was made in four lengths, each of from twenty-four to thirty feet, and the four prisoners each wore a length fastened under their clothes and tied round their bodies, until the time came for the attempt to be made.

After being once baulked by the suspicious alertness of the sentries, on just the night they were waiting for—a wild and stormy night with torrents of rain—they at length, at seven o'clock p.m. on September 14, 1808, made their venture.

O'Brien, as the leader in the enterprise, went first; stealthily leaving the dungeon and crossing the barrack-yard. He took with him a couple of long boot-hooks and the four lengths of the rope all joined together in one, "tightly wound in a ball and concealed in a pocket-handkerchief." So slight and frail was the apparatus to which the daring fellows proposed to entrust their lives. His intention was to loop one end of the rope round one of the spiked palisades at the foot of the upper ramparts, and then let the rest of the rope drop down from the uppermost of the three walls to the second wall below. To get to the palisades he had to pass close to a sentry-box, walking boldly in front of the soldier posted there.

"It was just dusk," relates O'Brien, "and I was to take six minutes on the forlorn hope, as it might justly be termed, to fix our rope to a palisade and to descend the first rampart, before Mr. Hewson followed, who was next on the list. I passed the sentinel quite close, and could see him leaning over his musket. He never moved, though I met his eye, probably taking me for one of the guards, and I arrived, providentially, at the spot fixed upon to make fast the rope, which I very soon accomplished, and was just in the act of descending when my friend Hewson

arrived. In a few minutes, to my inexpressible satisfaction, we were all four at the bottom of the first wall. Our principal object being now accomplished, we congratulated each other. We had two walls yet to descend; the heights, as I have already mentioned, being respectively from 90 to 100, from 40 to 50, and the third from 25 to 30 feet. We all clapped on to the rope, and crawled up with our feet against the wall, until we got a good height. We then swung off together, when the rope broke, and we fell upon one another, leaving in our hands enough to enable us to descend the next rampart. We made this piece fast to one of the upper stones of the embrasure, and again descended. We had now to repeat our haul upon the rope, and it again broke, leaving a piece of sufficient length for our future purpose, the descent of the third and last rampart.

"We had taken the precaution of providing two long boot-hooks to stick in the wall, to make our rope fast to, in case we should find no other means of securing it. These proved of the greatest use in getting down the third rampart. In fact, had we not had them with us, we must have surrendered ourselves, for not one single means could we find of fastening the rope to anything, and to drop from a height of 30 feet might have been destruction. The boot-hooks served our purpose: we were at the bottom of the third wall; and all that we had now to do was to pass the outer sentinels, who were few in number and rather slack in vigilance, perhaps from the supposed impossibility of any prisoner effecting an escape in this direction. We had, in fact, let ourselves down by this frail rope a total height of about from 180 to 200 feet.

"At the bottom of the third rampart we remained in the *fosse* or ditch; and we had to watch the turn of the sentinel that was pacing immediately before us. As soon as his back was fairly turned we ascended the scarp of the ditch, and gently rolled ourselves down the slope or glacis.

In a few minutes, with our hearts rebounding with joyous emotions, we were on the road to Strasburg, on which we continued running as fast as we possibly could for nearly an hour. We then halted to put on our shoes, which we had hung round our necks as we rolled down the glacis, as we had found it more secure to descend the walls without shoes than with them, the feet being much more pliable."

O'Brien adds this as the finale of the successful enterprise:

"We now turned round to take, as we hoped, a final view of the 'Mansion of Tears,' the name that had been so often given to this detestable fortress by the unfortunate prisoners, many of whom had shed an abundance, or showers, of them within its horrid cells and dungeons. We spontaneously returned our thanks to Almighty God for our deliverance, and shook each other cordially by the hand, overwhelmed with exultation at our almost miraculous success. When we looked at the stupendous height of the rock and fortress, it seemed as if a miracle alone could have enabled us to descend them, suspended by so light and ill-made a cord as that which we had been able to construct out of our shirt-linen and a little cobbler's twine!"

The story of the adventures which befell the four fugitives from Bitche in getting through Bavaria and Austria, their escapes, hardships, and breakdowns by the way, do not come within our limits here. All four in the end got safely through, although not all together.

Lord Blayney relates this of the fate that befell several prisoners in some of the attempts to escape from Bitche which failed, and the atrocious ferocity and vindictiveness with which the unfortunate victims were treated:

"Four midshipmen . . . escaped by excavating a depth of seventy feet until they arrived at a subterraneous passage which leads from the fort to the neighbouring woods, and is three leagues in length.

"This successful attempt some time after induced the whole of the prisoners to make a similar one, and each was sworn to secrecy and perseverance. In a few days they arrived at the subterraneous passage, but there were still three wooden doors and an iron one to be forced before they could gain the outside of the fort. These obstacles were also overcome, and the moment of accomplishment had just arrived, when one of the prisoners, a Jersey man named Williams, waited on the Commandant, to whom he discovered the whole plot.

"The Commandant, with a degree of ferocity without excuse because without necessity, ordered a guard of veteran soldiers to be placed at the spot where the prisoners were to evulge from their gloomy abode, with orders not to fire until a dozen at least were on the outside. These orders were exactly obeyed: the whole were shot dead, and their bodies exposed in the yard of the fort!

"This, indeed," continues the General, "was not by many the only instance of prisoners being killed in a cruel and wanton manner. Among the most lamented was Mr. Thomas Thomson, mate of His Majesty's cutter the *Dove*, who was run through the body with a bayonet by a sentinel who quitted his post, sixty yards off, for the purpose."

Says Midshipman O'Brien, speaking of his detention at Givet on his arrival as a prisoner in France: "During our stay at this depôt four of the seamen escaped from their prison, two of whom belonged to our late frigate. On their being missed the following morning, parties of gendarmes on horseback were despatched by the Commandant to search for them in all directions, with strict orders to mutilate, and, in fact, *not to bring them back alive*, in order that" (in Petervin's own words), "it might prove an example to the rest of the prisoners. However," as O'Brien tells, "fortunately for those poor fellows, they escaped their pursuers—at least, for that time. They

were afterwards taken at Dunkirk, as they were about to embark in an open boat."

A similar abominable atrocity, it would appear, indeed, was ordered on at least one occasion. Midshipman O'Brien relates this as having been told him on his being brought back to Bitche after his first attempt to escape from that place: "I was informed by one of the gendarmes that on the day after I had escaped their commanding officer had issued strict orders to the men of his corps, who had been despatched to scour the woods and the country in search of me, that, in the event of their finding me, they were to scar and disfigure me with their sabres *au front et au visage*, and to mutilate me in such a manner as would prove an example to deter, in future, any British prisoner of war from attempting to escape. This circumstance I heard frequently repeated afterwards by others of the same corps."

"Upon my putting the question to them," O'Brien says further, "whether, in the event of falling in with me, they would have actually put in execution these injunctions, some made an evasive reply and hesitated, while others, more candid, acknowledged that they would have been obliged to obey their orders *à la lettre*, and that, of course, they would have been directed to state, in justification of such conduct, that they had no alternative as I would not surrender, but resisted most desperately."

"Lieutenant Essel of the Navy and fourteen others had prepared a rope to descend the formidable wall of the fort. It was well secured and sufficiently strong, but, as descending one at a time would have caused too much delay, the whole fifteen determined to descend at once. This plan, however, was discovered to a veteran officer, who waited patiently until all these unfortunate young men were on the rope. Then, to the shame of humanity, he cut it. Several were dashed to pieces, and their mutilated bodies exposed, while none escaped without a broken limb."

"Six of them," Midshipman O'Brien relates again of an attempt that he was told of, "had broken out of their cave, had got a rope made of sheets, and were on the point of lowering themselves down, when they were discovered and an alarm given, which made four of them clap on the rope together, though only strong enough to lower one at a time, or two at most: the rope in consequence broke. One was dashed to pieces, and the three others . . . were so severely mangled and bruised that little hopes were at first entertained of their recovery. The remaining two were seized by the guards in the embrasure."

This act of cold-blooded atrocity, to conclude, committed on an escaping British prisoner, took place at Givet, when a midshipman named Hayward was deliberately murdered by one of the local gendarmes while trying to escape. A fellow midshipman tells in these words the story of poor Hayward's fate:

"This gallant fellow, with his friend Gale, had broken out of prison in the face of the day and fled into the country. Unfortunately they were discovered, and the alarm given. Two horse gendarmes immediately pursued, and overtook them in an open field. On their approach, Hayward being unarmed, and seeing escape impossible, stood still, extending his arms, and exclaiming: 'Je me rends;" but this was too favourable an opportunity to be neglected for the savage gratification of shedding human blood. Neither the defenceless state of the individual, nor his prompt surrender, could avert the merciless miscreants from plunging their swords into his manly chest and mangling the body in a horrible manner. It was afterwards taken into the prison yard, stripped naked, and exposed to the view of the prisoners for the purpose of intimidating others from the like attempt. Gale gave himself up at the same time, but although he received severe wounds, they did not prove mortal. It will scarcely be credited," adds the recorder

of the tragedy, "that the Commandant gave the perpetrators of this outrageous exploit a pecuniary reward, saying: 'I give you this for having killed one of them; had you killed both, the reward would have been doubled!'"

We come next to two personal narratives of successful escapes from Valenciennes and Bitche, as described in detail by the daring young officers who planned and conducted the enterprises.

MIDSHIPMAN BOYES' ACCOUNT OF HOW HE GOT AWAY

ONE of the most daring and adventurous escapes was carried out from Valenciennes in November, 1808, by a midshipman named Edward Boyes, together with three brother mids, named Hunter, Whitehurst, and Mansell. They had been prisoners for five years; for most of the time in detention at Verdun, without being able to meet with an opportunity of escape.

Midshipman Boyes, who wrote the story of the escape a few months afterwards, while on board ship on the West Indies Station, was taken prisoner at the outset of the war, at the beginning of September, 1803—while serving in the Mediterranean in *Phœbe*, one of Nelson's frigates watching Toulon. He was in charge of a prize, a coaster laden with fruit, which had been taken by the *Phœbe* off Cape Sicie, near Toulon, and was on his way with the refreshing cargo for distribution among the crews of Nelson's main fleet, then cruising off the coast of Catalonia, on the Spanish side of the Gulf of Lions, when some French men-of-war appeared on the scene. They retook the prize, and a second coaster which had been captured, the *Phœbe* herself only getting clear with difficulty.

A British sloop-of-war, the *Redbridge*, with a transport in her company, were also swooped down on in the same neighbourhood that afternoon, and in like manner carried off by the French into Toulon.

Midshipman Boyes, with two other midshipmen named

Murray and Whitehurst, the Lieutenant in command of the *Redbridge*, and six other midshipmen, together with the Master of the transport and ninety seamen, were landed at Toulon and marched inland as far as Toulouse. There they were kept in captivity for nearly three months, the officers being allowed parole in the city, until December 2, when all were assembled in a convoy, and set off on a long tramp across France to Verdun, escorted as usual by gendarmes.

In the account that he wrote of his captivity and subsequent adventures during his escape, Midshipman Boyes says this of his arrival at Verdun: "Upon being escorted to the citadel, certain regulations, as the conditions of my parole, were given to me for perusal. These I signed; permission was then given me to retire into the town, where I took lodgings suitable to my finances."

This was how Midshipman Boyes came to leave Verdun and be transferred to Valenciennes, where he found the opportunity for effecting his escape:

"In July, 1808, three midshipmen were taken in the very act of violating their parole. This afforded Wirion an opportunity of representing the whole class (including warrant-officers and masters of merchant vessels) as 'contumacious and refractory.' He further assured the Minister of War that nothing but extreme rigour and close confinement could ensure the persons of these '*très mauvais sujets*,' and that Verdun was inadequate to their security. The result was an order for the whole class to be removed, and on August 7, on going to the afternoon '*appel*,' we were arrested, to the number of 142, and sent to the citadel.

"The previous occurrence of similar events, though on a minor scale as to numbers, warned us to prepare for an early departure; but not a word to that effect escaped the commanding officer until late at night.

"At dawn of day the drum summoned us to muster. We were drawn up in two ranks: one of seventy-three

destined for Valenciennes and Givet, the other of sixty-nine for Sarrelouis and other depôts to the eastward. The northern expedition being ready, we were placed, two by two, upon bundles of straw, in five waggons, and set out, escorted by the greater part of the Horse Gendarmerie of the district, aided by infantry.

"My most intimate friend and brother-midshipman, Moyes, was of the party, and we had agreed to avail ourselves of the first opportunity to decamp; this, however, appeared almost hopeless. In the evening we arrived at Stenay, having travelled about twenty miles. . . . Parole had, hitherto, tended to reconcile me to captivity; but being now deprived of that honourable confidence, and feeling my pride wounded at the oppressive act of punishing the innocent for the guilty, no obstacle could avert my intention of finally executing what I now felt a duty; and it was cheering to find, in these feelings, my friend most cordially participated."

Having planned their scheme as well as they could manage, Midshipmen Boyes and Moyes kept on the alert for an opportunity, but every time they were baulked. After that, on their arrival at Mezières they were separated —one having to go among the prisoners ordered to Valenciennes, and the other to Givet.

Midshipman Boyes and his party were sent on to Valenciennes, where they arrived on August 17. They were conducted with great show by their escort to the citadel, their future quarters, where, in the barracks, there were already some fourteen hundred British prisoners, soldiers and sailors. The midshipmen in the party, General Wirion's "*très mauvais sujets*," it was announced were to be treated on the same terms as the soldiers and sailors. Their parole was withdrawn and no distinction whatever permitted, except that at certain hours the midshipmen were allowed to walk on the ramparts of the citadel facing the town.

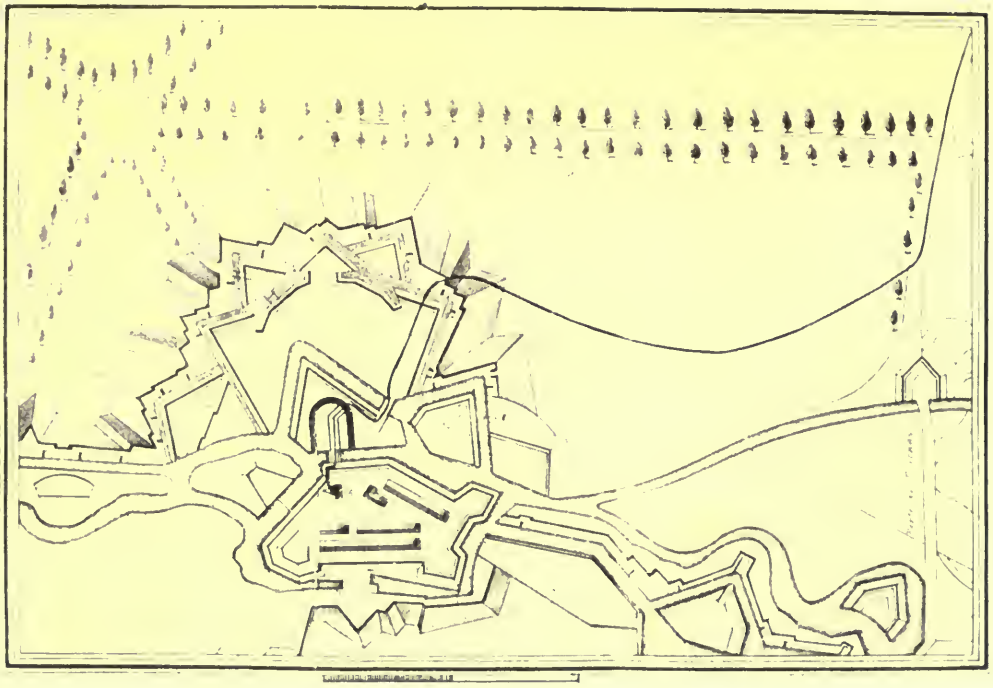
The portion of the citadel where they were allowed to

walk, had two gates—the northern gate leading to the Upper Citadel, the southern opening on to the town. At each gate there was a strong guard. In addition, through the western rampart, there was a small sally-port which led into an outwork, and from that into a garden, forming a triangle of about half an acre, where the River Escaut branched off into two streams, with a narrow canal passing between the citadel and the ravelin.

"Through this sally-port," says Midshipman Boyes, "it was my intention to make an attempt to escape, that appearing the weakest part. I meant to swim across the river and take my clothes in an umbrella prepared for the occasion. Some few days elapsed before I ventured to communicate my intentions to any one. Then I broached the subject to a brother-midshipman, named Ricketts, who readily entered into my views, and was willing to assist me in any way, but, from the most honourable motives, declined joining. A messmate named Cadell also declined. I then sounded several other midshipmen without success. In this state of suspense day after day elapsed, till September 4, when I applied to one whose name was Hunter. He approved of my plans and appeared gratified that I had selected him as a companion. It was agreed that we should start on the 14th, intending, by means of pick-locks, to get through the sally-port. I was the more sanguine from the circumstance of there being no sentinel at that door.

"The 14th arrived, everything wearing a favourable aspect, and the hour of 10 was appointed for the attempt; but about 4 p.m. Hunter surprised me by signifying his determination to postpone it until the spring, as from the season of the year he foresaw innumerable difficulties, and deemed success impossible. In this dilemma I became almost frantic, for, from so untimely and unexpected a secession, I doubted in whom to confide.

"My brother-officers getting intimation of my intention, whispered it about from one to the other, until it became



THE CITADEL OF VALENCIENNES, SHOWING HOW MIDSHIPMAN BOYES AND HIS COMPANIONS ESCAPED
(From a plan by Midshipman Boyes)

A. The Governor's House. B. Main Guard. C. Chapel. D. Ravelin. E. Powder Magazine. F. Officers' Barracks. G. Officers' Barracks. H. Officers' Barracks. I. Officers' Barracks. K. Officers' Barracks. L. Officers' Barracks. M. Officers' Barracks. N. Officers' Barracks. O. Officers' Barracks. P. Officers' Barracks. Q. Officers' Barracks. R. Officers' Barracks. S. Officers' Barracks. T. Officers' Barracks. U. Officers' Barracks. V. Officers' Barracks. W. Officers' Barracks. X. Officers' Barracks. Y. Officers' Barracks. Z. Officers' Barracks. a. Officers' Barracks. b. Officers' Barracks. c. Officers' Barracks. d. Officers' Barracks. e. Officers' Barracks. f. Officers' Barracks. g. Officers' Barracks. h. Officers' Barracks. i. Officers' Barracks. j. Officers' Barracks. k. Officers' Barracks. l. Officers' Barracks. m. Officers' Barracks. n. Officers' Barracks. o. Officers' Barracks. p. Officers' Barracks. q. Officers' Barracks. r. Officers' Barracks. s. Officers' Barracks. t. 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a topic of general conversation. At length it reached the ears of the police, and, in consequence of this, I was so closely watched that all my prospects for the present were blasted. The only way to remove their suspicions was perfect tranquillity for some time; and to divert the attention of the police I sent to Verdun for my clothes and dogs, which I had left there to avoid encumbrances on the road to Valenciennes. I should not neglect to mention that a sentinel was now placed at the before-mentioned sally-port, and stricter orders issued throughout the depôt.

"The midshipmen began to manifest impatience at the continuance of their 'durance vile,' and after several fruitless applications to the Commandant drew up a letter to the Minister of War, requesting restoration to parole, one sentence of which insured a flat denial, as it plainly intimated that a refusal would be attended with escape. A few days after I was delighted to learn that the Minister's answer was confined to a simple negative.

"I kept up a correspondence, per post, with my friend Moyes. It was my wish that he should make interest to be sent to Valenciennes, such removals being sometimes effected through the application of our own officers. Finding there was no probability of a junction, and all suspicion being at length removed, I again commenced sounding those around me, when I found an opening to make a proposal to a midshipman named Rochfort, and he came into it immediately. The strictest secrecy was observed, and we determined to be seldom seen together, although the most perfect harmony and cordiality prevailed between us, and I may add, an implicit confidence in mutual support.

"With the assistance of Ricketts and Cadell, our preparations were completed, and October 15 was fixed for our departure. I was the more anxious to carry our plans into execution so soon as matured because the Commandant, with unremitting diligence, was daily visiting

the citadel and as frequently changing the posts of the sentinels and issuing stricter regulations for the security of the prisoners.

"There still being a sentinel at the sally-port, my first plan was changed to that of getting into the Upper Citadel, which could only be effected by creeping upon the parapet above the North Gate, letting ourselves down upon the bridge over the canal, and passing through the ravelin. But, being unacquainted with those parts of the fortifications, we intended to risk all and trust to Providence for deliverance. . . . By the friendly aid of a *détenu* residing in the town we procured provisions, a map of the Northern Department, and several other necessaries almost indispensable on such an expedition. The only thing now wanting was a rope, which we obtained by purchasing skipping lines of the French boys, this being a general amusement amongst them at this season.

"About five p.m. on the day fixed for our departure, I was walking with Ricketts and discussing the proposed plans, which were then ripe for execution, when Cadell came up and told us that Rochfort had just been seized with headache and fever, so violent as to require his being immediately put to bed. This I could not credit, until made an eye-witness of the fact. Struck with astonishment I gazed on the sufferer, and, scarcely able to ask a question, stole into the yard absorbed in thought and perplexity, not cherishing the faintest hope of finding another in the citadel to join with me. I wandered about for some time reflecting on this extraordinary occurrence, little suspicious of what was afterwards developed, that, from our total ignorance of the impediments in passing into the Upper Citadel, failure and its attendant consequences must have been the result of trial at this time. My mind, however, was not to be diverted from the object in view; and no sooner had I roused myself from the effect of this disheartening

event than I began to meditate new schemes. I was resolved on the attempt *coûte que coûte*, but hesitated whether to await Rochfort's recovery or to look out for another companion.

"Day after day passed in this state of suspense, when, finding no amendment in his health, he was liberal enough to advise my seeking a helpmate among the seamen. He became so reduced by his illness, that, even if he did recover, he dared not risk exposure to night chills for a considerable time. It was, therefore, with extreme reluctance that I abandoned the hope of his company. I then went to several of the most steady quarter-masters and other petty officers, without success. Whether they doubted the possibility of escape, or were deterred by the recollection of the barbarous murders at Bitche, I cannot say. It was known, that when the Commandant of that place had gained intimation of an intended attempt, he suffered the fugitives to reach a certain point, where the gendarmes were concealed, ready to rush in, and murder them. Two sailors, named Marshall and Cox, fell victims to this refined system of Republican discipline."

It was in consequence of this incident at Valenciennes apparently that the project of escape came to be taken up again.

"In the beginning of November two sailors were sparring in the yard, and so common was this amusement, that it attracted the notice of no one but a stupid conscript of a sentinel, who, fancying they were quarrelling, quitted his post and commenced a brutal attack on them with the butt-end of his musket. This breach of military discipline soon collected a mob, and the endeavours of the men to ward off the blows gave them the appearance of acting offensively. The guard was called out, when the gendarmes, rushing through the crowd, cut and slashed on all sides. Whitehurst and I, happening to be there at the time, roused with in-

dignation at such wanton barbarity, also pushed in, in the hope of preventing bloodshed. The *maréchal des logis*, observing us in the *mêlée*, desired us to send the men to their rooms, who, on the order being given, immediately retired. This prompt obedience, bearing the appearance of generally acting under our influence, was, no doubt, the cause of our being denounced as the authors of the disturbance.

"The next morning, we were arrested and conducted to a separate place of confinement, upon the rampart facing the town. We were there locked up with a sentinel at the door, without communication with anyone, and ordered to be kept on bread and water. We there received secret information, that the Commandant had forwarded a report to the Minister of War, representing us as *chefs de complot*, the punishment of which, by the *Code Napoléon*, is death. Although this did not much trouble us, being conscious of the falsehood of the accusation, yet we judged it right to lay before the Commandant a firm and accurate relation of the facts, referring him to the *maréchal des logis* for proof of our interference having prevented more bloodshed, and restored tranquillity.

"This respectful appeal to the justice of the Commandant, corroborated by the evidence of the *maréchal*, succeeded in restoring us to our comrades and in inducing him to transmit a counter-statement to Paris. I mention this circumstance because it produced a proposition on the part of Whitehurst to attempt escape as soon as we could make the necessary preparations. I readily accepted his proposal; and, although I knew that from his inexperience in the management of small craft, his assistance, in the event of getting afloat, could not be great, I was perfectly convinced of his willingness and resolution. This consideration rendered it necessary, however, to seek a third person, and I sounded five men separately, in the course of the day; but, so prevalent

was the belief of the impossibility of getting out of the fortress, except by bribery, that they all declined.

"In this difficulty I consulted Ricketts, who proposed to introduce the subject again to Hunter. I consented to accept him as a companion, provided we took our departure in a week. This stipulation being conveyed to him, and our prospects painted in glowing colours, he agreed to join us. From that moment he behaved with firmness and cordiality: not an hour was lost in procuring everything needful for the occasion. But before we fixed a day we resolved to obtain some information respecting the obstacles in our passage to the Upper Citadel, that being the only way by which we could escape. It was necessary to be very cautious in this particular, and many schemes were suggested.

"At length, hearing that part of the fortifications abounded in wild rabbits, it occurred to me to offer my greyhounds to one of the gendarmes whenever he chose to make use of them. This I did, and the fellow mentioned it to the *maréchal des logis*, who was equally pleased with the expectation of sport. They very nearly believed that such beautiful English dogs could kill every rabbit they saw. Shortly after the gendarme came, with the keys in his hand for them, the *maréchal* waiting at the gate. The dogs, however, had been taught to follow no one but their master, so that their refusing to go afforded me an opportunity of offering to accompany them, which was immediately accepted. Whitehurst, Hunter, and two or three others, requested permission to go with us; four other gendarmes were ordered to attend, and we went in a tolerably large party. We took different directions round the ramparts, kicking the grass, under pretence of looking for rabbits. Few were found, and none killed; but we succeeded in making our observations, and, in about half an hour, returned, fully satisfied of the practicability of escape, though the difficulties we had to encounter were—scaling a wall, ascending the rampart unseen, escaping the

observations of three tiers of sentinels and the patrols, descending two ramparts of about 45 feet each, and forcing two large locks. These were not more than we expected, and we therefore prepared accordingly.

"On our return we fixed the night of November 15 for the attempt. Through a friend in town I got iron handles put to a pair of steel boot-hooks, intending to use them as pick-locks. The only thing now wanting was another rope, and as that belonging to the well in our yard was not trustworthy, we hacked several of the heart-yarns, so that the first time it was used it broke. A subscription was made by the mids, and a new rope applied for: by these means we had at command about 36 feet, in addition to what our friends had before purchased of the boys. Everything was now prepared: the spirits and provisions, in knapsacks, were concealed in the dog-kennel. On the 14th Whitehurst communicated the secret to a young mid named Mansell, who immediately proposed to join.

"At length the day arrived which I so ardently desired, and the feelings of delight with which I hailed it were such as allowed me to anticipate none but the happiest results. The thought of having lost so many years from the service of my country during an active war had frequently embittered hours which otherwise would have been cheerful and merry, and now proved a stimulant to perseverance, exceeded only by that which arose from the desire I felt to impress upon the minds of Frenchmen the inefficacy of vigilance and severity to enchain a British officer, when compared with that milder and more certain mode of securing his person—confiding in his honour!"

The night of November 15, however, was too clear for the purpose—bright starlight. Midshipman Boyes was willing to risk going out, but Cadell and Ricketts were against it, and had some difficulty in persuading Boyes to defer his departure until the next night, in the hope that it would be darker then.

"In the afternoon," says Boyes, "we amused ourselves

with writing a letter to the Commandant, in which we thanked him for his civilities, and assured him that it was the rigid and disgraceful methods of the French Government which obliged us to prove the inefficacy of locks, bolts, and fortresses; and that, if he wished to detain British officers, the most effectual method was to put them upon their honour, for that alone was the bond which had enchained us for more than five years. This letter was left with Ricketts, to be dropped the following day near the '*Corps de garde*.'

"At half-past seven p.m. we assembled, armed with clasp-knives, and each provided with a paper of fine pepper, upon which we placed our chief dependence. In case of being closely attacked, we intended throwing a handful into the eyes of the assailants and running away. The plan was that Hunter and myself were to depart first, fix the rope and open the opposing doors; a quarter of an hour afterwards Whitehurst and Mansell were to follow. By these means we diminished the risk attendant on so large a body as four moving together, and secured the advantage of each depending more upon his own care; for if Hunter and myself were shot in the advance, the other two would remain in safety; and if, on the contrary, they were discovered, we hoped to have time during the alarm to gain the country.

"Our intentions were to make for the seaside, and range the coast to Breskins, in the Island of Cadsand opposite Flushing. If means of getting afloat were not found before arriving at that place, we proposed to embark in the passage-boat for Flushing, and about mid-channel rise and seize the vessel. It was now blowing very fresh, and was so dark and cloudy that not a star could be seen; the leaves were falling in abundance, and as they were blown over the stones, kept up a constant rustling noise which was particularly favourable to the enterprise.

"Indeed, things wore so promising an appearance, that we resolved to take leave of a few other of our brother-

officers. Eight of them were accordingly sent for. To these I detailed our exact situation, the difficulties we had to contend with, and the means of surmounting them. I reminded them of our letter to the Commandant of last month, and the glory of putting our threats into execution, in spite of the increased vigilance, and read the one we had that afternoon written. I proposed that any of them should follow that chose, but with this stipulation: that they allowed four hours to elapse before they made the attempt. Upon which, it being a quarter-past eight, Hunter and myself, with woollen socks over our shoes, that our footsteps might not be heard, and each having a rope, a small poker or a stake, and a knapsack, took leave of our friends and departed.

"We first went into the backyard, and assisted by Rochfort, who was now convalescent but not sufficiently strong to join the party, got over the wall and passed through the garden and palisades. We crossed the road and climbed silently upon our hands and knees up the bank at the back of the north guard-room; lying perfectly still as the sentinels approached, and as they receded, again advancing until we reached the parapet over the gateway leading to the Upper Citadel. Here the breast-work, over which we had to creep, was about five feet high and fourteen thick; and, it being the highest part of the citadel, we were in danger of being seen by several sentinels below. But fortunately the cold, bleak wind induced some of them to take shelter in their boxes.

"With the utmost precaution we crept upon the summit, and down the breastwork towards the outer edge of the rampart, when the sentinel made his quarter-hourly cry of 'Sentinelle, prenez garde à vous,' similar to our 'All's well.' This, though it created for a moment rather an unpleasant sensation, convinced me that we had reached thus far unobserved. I then forced the poker into the earth, and by rising and falling with nearly my whole weight, hammered it down with my chest. About two

feet behind, I did the same with the stake, fastening a small line from the upper part of the poker to the lower part of the stake. This done, we made the well-rope secure round the poker and gently let it down through one of the grooves in the rampart, which receives a beam of the drawbridge when up. I then cautiously descended this half-chimney, as it were, by the rope. When I had reached about two-thirds of the way down part of a brick fell, struck against the side, and rebounded against my chest: this I luckily caught between my knees, and carried down without noise. I crossed the bridge and waited for Hunter, who descended with equal care and silence.

"We then entered the ravelin, proceeded through the arched passage, which formed an obtuse angle with a massive door leading to the Upper Citadel, and, with my picklock, endeavoured to open it. Not finding the bolt yield with gentle pressure, I added the other hand, and gradually increased the force until I exerted my whole strength; when suddenly something broke. I then tried to file the catch of the bolt, but that being cast-iron the file made no impression. We then endeavoured to cut away the stone wall which receives the bolt, but that was fortified with a bar of iron, which rendered our attempt abortive; the picklocks were again applied, but with no better success.

"It now appeared 'complete check-mate'; and, as the last resource, it was proposed to return to the bridge, slip down the piles, and float along the canal on our backs; there being too little water to swim, and too much to ford it. In the midst of our consultation, it occurred to me, that it would be possible to undermine the gate. This plan was no sooner proposed than commenced; but having no other implements than our pocket-knives, some time elapsed before we could indulge any reasonable hopes of success; the pavement stones under the door were about ten inches square and so closely bound together that it was a most difficult and very tedious process.

"About a quarter of an hour had been thus employed, when we were alarmed by a sudden noise, similar to the distant report of a gun, echoing in tremulous reverberations through the arched passage. As the sound became fainter, it resembled the cautious opening of the Great Gate, creating a belief that we were discovered. We jumped up, and drew back towards the bridge, intending, if possible, to steal past the gendarmes, and slip down the piles into the canal; but the noise subsiding, we stood still, fancying we heard the footsteps of a body of men. The recollection of the barbarous murders at Bitche, on a similar occasion, instantly presented itself to my sensitive imagination. It is impossible to describe the conflicting sensations which rushed upon my mind during this awful pause. Fully impressed with the conviction of discovery and of our falling immediate victims to the merciless rage of ferocious blood-hounds, I stood and listened, with my knife in savage grasp, waiting the dreadful issue. Then suddenly I felt a glow flash through my veins which hurried me on with the desperate determination to succeed or make a sacrifice of life in the attempt.

"We had scarcely reached the turning when footsteps were again heard; and, in a whispering tone, 'Boyes!' This welcome sound created so sudden a transition from desperation to serenity, from despair to a pleasing conviction of success, that in an instant all was hope and joy. Reinforced by our two friends we again returned to our work of mining with as much cheerfulness and confidence as though already embarked for England. They told us the noise was occasioned by the fall of a knapsack, which Mansell, unable to carry down the rope, had given to Whitehurst, from whom it slipped, and falling upon a hollow-sounding bridge between two lofty ramparts echoed through the arched passage with sufficient effect to excite alarm.

"Three of us continued mining until half-past ten, when the first stone was raised, and in twenty minutes more the

second. About eleven, the hole was big enough to allow us to creep under the door. The drawbridge was up: there was, however, sufficient space to allow us to climb up, and it being square, there was, of course, an opening in the arch. Through this we crept, lowering ourselves down by the line, which was passed over the chain of the bridge; and keeping both parts in our hands, landed on the *garde-fous* (two iron bars, one above the other, suspended by chains on each side of the bridge, when down, serving the purpose of handrails). Had the bars been taken away escape would have been impossible, there not being sufficient line for descending into the ditch. We then proceeded through another arched passage, with the intention of undermining the second door; but to our great surprise and joy, we found it unlocked. We now got down, crossed the ditch upon the *garde-fous*, landed in the Upper Citadel, proceeded to the north-east curtain, fixed the stake, and fastened the rope.

"As I was getting down, with my chest against the edge of the parapet, the stake gave way. Whitehurst, who was sitting by it, snatched hold of the rope and Mansell of his coat, whilst I was endeavouring to grasp the grass, by which I was saved from a fall of about fifty feet. Fortunately, there was a solitary tree in the citadel, from which we cut a second stake; and the rope being doubly secured, we all got down safe with our knapsacks, except Whitehurst, who, when about two-thirds of the way, from placing his feet against the rampart, and not letting them slip so fast as his hands, got himself in nearly a horizontal position. Seeing his danger, I seized the rope, and placed myself in rather an inclined posture under him: he fell upon my arm and shoulder with a violent shock; fortunately neither of us was hurt.

"We all shook hands, and in the excess of joy heartily congratulated ourselves upon this providential success, after a most perilous and laborious work of three hours and three-quarters. Having put our knapsacks a little in

order, we mounted the glacis and followed a footpath which led to the eastward. But a few minutes elapsed before several objects were observed on the ground, which imagination, ever on the alert, metamorphosed into gendarmes in ambush: we, however, marched on, when, to our no small relief, they were discovered to be cattle.

"Gaining the high road, we passed (two and two, about forty paces apart) through a very long village, and having travelled three or four miles, felt ourselves so excessively thirsty that we stopped to drink at a ditch. In the act of stooping, a sudden flash of lightning from the southward so frightened us (supposing it to be the alarm-gun) that, instead of waiting to drink, we ran for nearly half an hour. We stopped a second time, and were startled by a second flash, which alarmed us even more than the first, for we could not persuade ourselves it was lightning, though no report was heard.

"Following up the road in quick march, our attention was suddenly arrested by a drawbridge, which being indicative of a fortified place, we expected a guard-house to be close at hand. We were at first apprehensive of meeting with a serious impediment; but observing the gates to be open, we concluded that those at the other extremity would be also open, and therefore pushed forward. We drank at the pump in the square, when it was recollected that this was the little town of St. Amand. Directing our course by the North Star, which was occasionally visible, we passed through without seeing a creature.

"About an hour after, still continuing a steady pace, four stout fellows rushed out from behind a hedge and demanded where we were going. Whitehurst and Mansell immediately ran up; and as we had previously resolved never to be taken by equal numbers, each seized his pepper and his knife, in preparation for fight or flight, replying in a haughty tone of defiance: 'What is that to you? Be careful how you interrupt military men!' Then we whispered loud enough for them to hear, '*La*

bayonette,' upon which they dropped astern, though still keeping near us. In the course of a quarter of an hour, on turning an angle of the road, we lost sight of them. We continued a rapid march, frequently running, until about 5 a.m., when we were unexpectedly stopped by the closed gates of a town. We retraced our steps a short distance in the hope of discovering some other road; but we could find neither a footpath, nor wood, nor any other place of concealment.

"We quitted the highroad and drew towards a rising ground, there to await the dawn of day, in the hope of retreating to some neighbouring copse. No sooner had we laid ourselves upon the ground than sleep overcame us. Our intention was, if no wood could be seen, to go to an adjoining ploughed field and there scratch a hole in which we could hide ourselves from a distant view.

"Upon awakening from a short slumber, we reconnoitred the ground, and found our position to be near a fortification. Being well acquainted with such places, we approached in the hope of finding an asylum. At break of day we descended into the ditch, and found the entrance into the subterraneous works of the covered way nearly all blocked up with ruins and bushes. An opening, however, was made; we crept in, our quarters were established, and the rubbish and bushes replaced in the space of a few minutes. This most providential and pleasing discovery, added to our many escapes from detection, excited a feeling of gratitude to that Omnipotent Being Who, in His infinite mercy, had thus cast His protecting wings around us.

"I have since heard that the first intimation of our departure at Valenciennes was at dawn of day, when, on opening the north gate, the rope was seen suspended from the parapet. The roll to muster was instantly beaten, and the alarm given to the neighbouring peasantry by the firing of guns. The midshipmen, on whom suspicion first fell, were hurried into ranks, half-dressed; and when the names of the absentees were called over, someone taunt-

ingly replied: 'Parti pour l'Angleterre!' This tone of triumph considerably exasperated the gendarmes, and inflamed the zeal of our pursuers; it also might have had some influence in exciting the solicitude of the Commandant for our apprehension.

"The whole town was in confusion. All the bloody-minded rabble were let loose, with multifarious weapons and *carte blanche*, to *massacrer* these lawless *aspirants;* besides which 500 of the *Garde Nationale* were despatched to scour all the woods within five leagues, and an additional reward of 300 livres was offered for the capture of each of us. The reason for limiting the search to that distance was a belief of the improbability of our having exceeded it after the arduous task of undermining, etc.

"But to proceed. We were totally unacquainted with the country, and examination of the maps pointed out the place of our retreat to be the fortification of Tournay. The fallen ruins were the bed upon which fatigue and a confidence of security procured us a sound and refreshing sleep. At 3 p.m. we enjoyed our dinner, notwithstanding the want of beverage; for, upon examining the knapsacks, the flasks were found broken. Whitehurst, having lost his hat in descending the first rampart, was occupied in manufacturing a cap from the skirts of his coat. It rained all the afternoon, and the weather in the evening getting worse, we were detained until about 10 p.m. Then, no prospect of its clearing up presenting itself, we quitted our comfortable abode, walked round the citadel to the westward over ploughed ground, until, coming to a turnip field, we regaled ourselves most sumptuously. By eleven we had rounded the town and gained the north road.

"During the night we passed through several villages without seeing anyone, and at 6 a.m. arrived at the suburbs of Courtray, expecting there to find as snug a retreat as the one we had left the preceding evening. But, to our mortification, the town was enclosed with

wet ditches, which obliged us to seek safety elsewhere. Observing a farmhouse on the right, our steps were directed towards it, and thence through by-lanes, until a mansion was discovered; this we approached, in the hope of finding an outhouse which would afford us shelter for the day. Nothing of the kind could be seen; but, not far distant, a thicket was descried, of about 150 paces square, surrounded by a wet ditch from fourteen to twenty feet wide. Here, then, we determined to repose our wearied limbs, and, it being daylight, not a moment was to be lost. The opposite side of the narrowest part of the ditch was one entire bed of brambles, and in the midst of these we were obliged to leap.

"Hunter, Mansell, and myself got over tolerably well; but when Whitehurst made the attempt, stiff with wet and cold, and the bank giving way from his great weight, he jumped into the water. It was with difficulty he could be extricated, and not without being dragged through the brambles, by which he was severely scratched. We lay ourselves down in the centre of this swampy thicket. The rain had continued without intermission from the time of our leaving Tournay, and notwithstanding it somewhat discommoded us, yet we were consoled by the additional security it afforded. This little island protected us till nearly dark, when we walked round it to find the easiest point of egress. From the torrents of rain that had fallen during the day, the ditches had become considerably wider, and there was only one opening in the bushes whence a leap could be made. By this, three of us profited; the fourth obtained a passage by the aid of a decayed willow which overhung the opposite bank."

In this manner, and with a continuation of bad weather, the party pursued their course to Blankenberge, a village on the sea coast to the eastward of Ostend. On their arrival at the gates of Bruges (after passing through Haerlebeck and Deynse), they were all in the most deplorable condition—wet to the skin, their feet bleeding

and so swollen that they could scarcely walk at the rate of three miles an hour.

"Near the gates," continues Midshipman Boyes, "we observed a public-house, and having hitherto found such places to afford relief and safety at this hour of the night, we entered, and saw nobody but an old woman and a servant. At first they appeared somewhat surprised, but asked no questions except such as regarded our wants, frequently exclaiming *pauvres conscrits!* We dried our clothes, when the sudden transition from cold to heat split Hunter's feet: several of his nails also were loose, and Whitehurst had actually walked off two. The fire made us all so very sensitive that we could scarcely bear our feet to the floor, but found some relief by bathing them in oil. Having, however, enjoyed a comfortable supper, we lay ourselves down, keeping watch in turn, until 4 a.m., when we paid the old woman and departed."

Midway between Bruges and Blankenberge, they came upon another friend in need, a Madame Derikre, landlady of the "Raie de Chat," a wayside public-house standing by itself. By her, indeed, they were concealed and kept from discovery for some time; until they finally managed to effect their escape.

During the weeks that they lay hidden in the "Raie de Chat," Midshipman Boyes contrived to make no fewer than thirteen trips to the coast in the hope of being able to secure a vessel to carry them to England; but in every case without success. He thus relates what took place on his last trip and how it failed.

"On the night of May 4, 1809, finding several vessels nearly afloat, I returned to our party with the joyful information. Furnished with provisions and a lantern, we proceeded silently to the water's edge and jumped on board the easternmost vessel, in the pleasing confidence of having at length evaded the vigilance of the enemy, and of being on the eve of restoration to our native soil. The wind was fresh and squally from the

west-north-west with a good deal of swell ; the moon, only three days after the full, was so obscured by dark clouds that the night was very favourable for our purpose. The vessel was moored by five hawsers—two ahead and three astern. It was arranged that Whitehurst and Mansell should throw overboard the latter, Hunter and myself the former. This was preferred to cutting them. We had been so long in Flanders, and received such protection from the natives that all harsh feeling which might have existed towards an enemy was so mellowed into compassion for their sufferings under the Corsican yoke, that we were unwilling to injure one of them. We therefore had determined, if in our power, to send back the craft, which, being a fishing *schuyt*, might probably be the only support of an indigent family.

"Whilst Whitehurst and Mansell were executing the duty allotted to them, Hunter and myself got ready the foresail and paid overboard one of the hawsers. The tide now rolled in, the vessel floated, and we hove her out to within four fathoms of her buoy. Whitehurst and myself being ready to cut the other hawser and hoist the sail, Hunter went to the helm, when he found the rudder was not shipped, but lying on the poop. We instantly ran aft, and got it down over the stern, but the vessel pitched so heavily that it was not possible to ship the lower pintle. We were now apprehensive of the whole failure of the attempt, for to go to sea without a rudder would have been absolute madness; and being nearly under the battery, we were in momentary expectation of being fired into.

"Several minutes were passed in this state of anxiety and danger, still persevering in the attempt to ship the rudder; but at length, finding it impossible without a guide below, and feeling that our only hope was dependent upon the success of this important effort, in the excitement of the moment I jumped overboard. At the same instant the vessel springing a little ahead, and

the sea washing me astern, it was not without the greatest exertion I could swim up to get hold of the stern-post. Hunter, seeing I was dashed from her by every wave, threw me a rope; this I made fast round my waist, and then with some trouble succeeded in shipping the rudder. The effort of swimming and getting on board again, although assisted by my comrades, so completely exhausted me that I lay on my back for some time, incapable of moving a limb; but at length rallying, I went forward to help hoist the foresail, whilst Hunter cut the hawser and ran to the helm.

"The sail was no sooner up than the vessel sprung off, as if participating in our impatience and glorying in our deliverance; such, however, is the uncertainty and vanity of all human projects, that at the very moment when we believed ourselves in the arms of liberty, and our feelings were worked up to the highest pitch of exultation, a violent shock suddenly arrested our progress. We flew aft, and found that a few fathoms of the starboard-quarter hawser having been accidentally left on board, as it ran out, a kink was formed near the end, which, getting jammed between the head of the rudder and the stern-post, had brought the vessel up all standing. The knife was instantly applied, but the hawser was so excessively taut and hard that it was scarcely cut through one strand ere the increasing squall had swung her round on the beach.

"At this critical juncture, as the forlorn hope, we jumped out to seize another vessel, which was still afloat, when Winderkins (a man engaged by the landlady of the 'Raie de Chat' to assist them in their escape) seeing a body of men running from the top of the sand-hills in order to surround us, gave the alarm. We immediately made a resolute rush directly across, leaving our knapsacks and everything but the clothes on our backs in the vessel. The summit was gained just in time to slip over on the other side unseen. We ran along the sand-hills

towards Blankenberge for about a hundred yards, when, mistaking a broad ditch for a road, I fell in, but scrambled out on the opposite side. Mansell, who was close at my heels, thinking that I had jumped in on purpose, followed; this obliged the others to jump also.

"Having regained the 'Raie de Chat,' we related the heartrending disaster to Madame Derikre. Fearing, from the many articles left in the vessel, that some of them would give a clue to our late abode, and be the means of causing a strict search, she was desired to destroy everything that could lead to discovery or suspicion; then, taking all the bread in the house, and leaving Mansell there, we immediately set out for a wood on the other side of Bruges, where we arrived a little before daylight."

Mansell, after remaining hidden, got away from the inn disguised as a girl, and boldly walking off to Bruges, found shelter with friends there.

"Not having had time to dry our clothes at the 'Raie de Chat,'" continues Midshipman Boyes, "we were in a most deplorable state, shivering with cold and wet to the skin; the tails of our jackets solid boards of ice, and not a shoe amongst us worthy of the name! In this wood we remained three days, each succeeding hour seeming to redouble the sufferings of the last."

During that time the "Raie de Chat" was twice searched by gendarmes and police officers, but fortunately for Madame Derikre they found nothing to confirm their suspicions.

Speaking of his subsequent hiding in another wood, about two miles to the eastward of the house, Midshipman Boyes says this of their sufferings:

"The weather became intensely cold, and, literally clad in armour of ice, we lay listening to the whistling wind, and shivering with exposure to the chilling blast, which not only defied repose but threatened the most calamitous effects. Indeed, our limbs were sometimes so benumbed that it became absolutely indispensable to shake and twist

ourselves about, to promote the necessary circulation of the blood. Nor did there appear any prospect of the termination of this misery; for, as the black and ponderous clouds passed swiftly over us, the wind increased, the hail beat furiously down, and the trees trembled, until the raging violence of the storm seemed to threaten the uprooting of the very wood we occupied. In this exposed situation, with variable though piercing cold weather, we remained until the 15th.

"Whitehurst now suffered so severely from illness that doubts arose as to the possibility of his continuing much longer in this state of exposure; and, had not his complaint taken a favourable turn, his patience and fortitude must soon have yielded to stern and absolute necessity."

About the end of March they learned that Mansell had managed to get on board a smuggler, and had in that manner reached England.

Midshipman Boyes, then, on April 1, disguised as a carpenter, made an expedition to Bruges, where he in some way managed to interest a lady resident in his case, the wife of a "*notaire publique*" named Moitier, a Belgian gentleman of anti-Napoleonic leanings. Through the influence of the Moitiers he contrived to get the loan of a passport belonging to a man named Neirinks, whom Midshipman Boyes, in his narrative, describes as a Flemish "*Chevalier d'Industrie.*" Neirinks, at any rate, did not try to swindle Midshipman Boyes. Accompanied by him and his sister, Boyes made a journey by way of Ghent, Brussels, Charleroi, and Namur, with the chivalrous intention of making an attempt to get his friend Moyes free before he himself left the country. But his generous intentions were to no purpose. On his arrival near Dinant he learned, to his great disappointment, that Moyes had been transferred to Bitche. After that there only remained for him to see after himself and his comrades, Whitehurst and Hunter.

Returning to Bruges, he remained there in hiding until

April 29. Then, again under the guidance of Neirinks, who proved himself throughout a trusty friend, he made his way once more to the "Raie de Chat," and picking up Whitehurst and Hunter there, the four contrived to get to Flushing. There the faithful Neirinks was able at last to procure a boat for them. They stole on board at midnight on May 8, rowed out until near the Goodwin Sands, where they came across an English fishing smack, by means of which they were landed safely at Dover early in the morning of May 10.

Promoted Lieutenant shortly after reporting himself at the Admiralty, Midshipman Boyes, during the summer of the same year, while serving with the Walcheren Expedition, was enabled to contrive the escape of his two friends, Ricketts and Rochfort, and with that the tale ends.

MIDSHIPMAN ASHWORTH'S BOLD DASH FOR LIBERTY

A MESSMATE of O'Brien's, a fellow-midshipman with him on board the wrecked *Hussar*, Henry Ashworth, effected an escape from Bitche with a number of companions one mid-winter night, in December, 1808.

Midshipman Ashworth, with three other midshipmen—Christopher Tuthill of the *Impétueux*, who had been wrecked in a boat on the rocky islet of Beniguet off Brest; George Hall Dacre, wrecked off Cherbourg in the *Minerve* with Captain Brenton; George Potts, taken with Captain Wesley Wright on board the *Vincejo* brig in the Loire; Charles Roberts, George Brine, and Walter Adams, merchant-service skippers; Joseph Giles and John Daly, respectively a master and purser in the Navy; and a seaman named John Light, all young men—in the summer of 1808 made an attempt, which failed, to escape from the dungeon in Bitche in which they were confined by digging a tunnel beneath the pavement of the place. They were discovered in the act, and were soon afterwards marched off, heavily chained and ironed, to Metz, to be tried there by court-martial for attempting to escape, and, as it was alleged, setting fire to their prison, and receive the atrocious and inhuman sentence of penal servitude for periods varying between fifteen and nine years in the galleys at Toulon.

At the trial, we are told, their counsel, two French advocates of Metz, "used most powerful and eloquent language and arguments in their favour; pointed out the

inconsistency of suspecting people who were barred in and secured some thirty-five feet underground of setting fire to the very place they themselves were in, without a probability of getting out; and dwelt upon the very great severity of condemning young officers and gentlemen in the prime of life to be slaves for simply endeavouring to regain their liberty and return to their native country." But it was all in vain; the atrocious sentence was passed.

This translation of the official summary of the court-martial and sentence, as published in England at the time, is reproduced here as something of a curiosity:

"CITY OF METZ

"*The copy of a sentence passed by a military tribunal of the Third Military Division of the Interior, assembled this 29th day of August, one thousand eight hundred and eight.*

"*The Military Tribunal, formed by virtue of the Imperial Decree of the 17th Frimaire, Year 14, and composed, conformable to the said decree, of Messieurs:*

"*Esnard, Major of the 100th Regiment of Infantry of the Line, President.*

"*Probst, Chief of Battalion, Sub-Director of the Academy of Science.*

"*Pastrie, Captain in the 100th Regiment of Infantry of the Line.*

"*Rivière, Captain in the 24th Regiment of Light Infantry.*

"*Gally, Lieutenant in the 103rd Regiment of the Line.*

"*Monsieur Rampont, Captain of Gensdarmerie, performing the duty of Prosecutor.*

"*The whole appointed by the General of Division, Toget, Commandant-in-Chief of the Third Military Division, assisted by Monsieur Duchosal, Judge Advocate: all of whom, conformable to the stipulations of the articles 7 and 8 of the Law of the 13th Brumaire,*

Year 5, are exempt from any relationship existing between them and the prisoners, which the law forbids.

"The Military Tribunal, convoked by the order of the General of Division, assembled at Metz, in one of the Chambers of the Guildhall, or Hôtel de Ville, for the purpose of judging the undermentioned—Henry Ashworth, George Hall Dacre, Walter Adams, Christopher Tuthill, George Brine, and John Light, charged with being the principals of a conspiracy of evasion or desertion, which had taken place on the nights of the 17th and 18th of July last, in the souterrain of the English officers detained in the fortress of Bitche.

"George Potts, John Daly, Joseph Giles, and Charles Roberts, all English prisoners of war, accused of being the principal incendiaries in the attempt that was made on the nights of the 18th and 19th of July to set on fire one of the souterrains of the said fortress of Bitche.

"The court having been opened, the President directed the Judge Advocate to lay the different documents before him on the table, and afterwards requested the prosecutor to read the examinations, and to state the different circumstances for and against the prisoners.

"This being accomplished, the President commanded the guard to conduct the said prisoners into the court, who were introduced, or led in before the tribunal, disburdened of their fetters, assisted by Messrs. Mangay and Mangier, counsellors, residents at Metz, who were their counsel.

"After having given the prisoners information of the charges alleged against them, and their being interrogated by the President; having heard the different evidences on the part of the prosecutor, also the prosecutor in his different allegations, and the prisoners in their means of defence, as well as their counsel, both of whom had declared that they had nothing more to add by way of defence, the President asked the members of the Military Tribunal, if they had any observations to make? Upon their replying in the negative, the court was cleared; and after some

time the prisoners were re-conducted before the Tribunal, when Henry Ashworth, George Hall Dacre, George Brine, Walter Adams, and John Light, were sentenced to serve as slaves in the galleys for fifteen years, and Christopher Tuthill for ten years, as they supposed him the least culpable.

"George Potts, John Daly, Joseph Giles, and Charles Roberts, sentenced to serve as slaves in the galleys for nine years."

For some reason not stated Napoleon revised the sentence. He reduced it to one of rigorous confinement in the dungeons of Bitche, as before, for the duration of the war: a terrible enough punishment in itself. The order for the prisoners to be conducted back to Bitche reached Metz from Paris just as they were being started off for Toulon.

Tramped back to Bitche, again heavily fettered, the Metz *condamnés* arrived on September 15; as it happened, on the very evening on which Midshipman O'Brien with his friend Hewson and two other midshipmen proposed to make their third attempt at escape. Ashworth, as has been said, had been a brother-midshipman with O'Brien in the *Hussar*, and Tuthill had travelled in company with the two in the same convoy of prisoners, when they were first sent to Bitche. Explaining that they were very close friends of his and old comrades, O'Brien managed to prevail on the gendarme in charge of the *souterrain* in which he was quartered to allow Ashworth and Tuthill to have supper with him that night in his place of confinement before the two were removed to their punishment dungeon below.

During the meal, O'Brien asked Ashworth what he thought about making another attempt at escape. "No," was the reply; "I hardly think I dare run the risk again. This ghastly last sentence has quite bowled me out!" "What would you think," was O'Brien's rejoinder, "if

Hewson and myself were to be off this very night?" Ashworth smiled incredulously at the idea, taking it at first for a jest—as a scheme utterly impracticable. He soon learned that O'Brien was in earnest. "Before they took their final leave," says another naval officer, "O'Brien convinced him that they fully intended putting his plan seriously to the trial, and excited in him a feeling of regret that it was not in his power to avail himself of the opportunity to share in the attempt, notwithstanding the deep impression his late sentence had made on him.

"That night O'Brien and his companions carried their project into execution: picked the locks of their prison, eluded the vigilance of the sentinels, descended the walls, and after an anxious and painful progress of difficulty and danger through a course of thirteen hundred miles, arrived safe at Trieste in the month of November."

Midshipman Ashworth got the news of his messmate's ultimate success, through a secret channel, at the end of November, by means of a letter which O'Brien wrote to him from Trieste, "directed in German to avoid suspicion," which was smuggled into Bitche.

The letter roused Ashworth from the state of depression into which he had sunk, and incited him to make yet one more attempt at escape. How he effected that successfully and rejoined the Navy is told in his own words in a manuscript narrative which he began, but unfortunately was unable to complete before he met his death in action in a boat attack off Tarragona.

This is the story as the hero of the exploit tells it:

"It was a gloomy night in December, between the hours of seven and eight, that myself and eleven unfortunate Englishmen, long confined in the fortress of Bitche, exposed to all the miseries of such a confinement, rendered more irksome by having repeatedly attempted in vain to recover our liberty, began to put in execution a plan of escape. At four o'clock we were locked up in our room, fourteen in number, two of whom were prevented

by ill-health, from engaging with us in this arduous undertaking.

"Having made all the necessary preparations, as well for getting out of the fort, as for resisting the inclemency of the weather, in case as of being so fortunate as to succeed in the first part of our attempt, we proceeded to force the door of the chamber, which was secured by a lock on the inside, and a padlock on the outside. The bolt of the inside lock was forced back with little difficulty; the padlock gave us more trouble, and it was only by boring and cutting the door round the fastening of the hasp, that we at length succeeded. In performing this operation, the greatest precaution was requisite, as in the room beneath, which was the ground floor, were lodged a part of our guards, under whose special charge we were placed.

"The forcing of this door formed, however, but a small part of our difficulties: we had now to ascend a flight of stairs, at the top of which was a door which communicated with the other side of the building. This door had been long planked up for greater security, and it was only by cutting through one of the planks, that we could hope to effect a passage. Our implements were little calculated for this undertaking, but we had no choice. The plank was first bored across with a gimblet, as close as the workman, whose fingers were his only guide, could effect it; it was then cautiously sawed through with a knife, notched for the purpose. The plank thus divided, still required a violent effort to force it from the place it had so long occupied; and when it at length yielded to repeated tugs, the whole building resounded with the crash. A fear of immediate discovery seized us—a silence of some minutes followed—till, at length, recovering our presence of mind, we recollected that so total an inactivity would be more likely than anything else to raise the suspicions of those below. The passage being now clear, the workmen again descended to the apartment, to await an opportunity, and to make their last preparations.

"The rope with which we were to descend the wall had been some time prepared. It was made of strips of linen, bought at different times, under the pretence of making some towels. These strips, each of about eighteen inches in width, were rolled up, with a slip of blanket in the middle, to increase the bulk, and to render it soft to the hand. It was then marled at every two or three feet with twine; it was about forty feet in length, the ramparts which we had to descend being about eighty feet in height. This length of rope, even when rolled tight, formed a ball of considerable magnitude. The conspirators, for so we were to be termed, had been used to put it into a large kettle, which they hung on one side of the fire, when they apprehended that a search might be made. We now drew lots to determine who should first sally forth, and try his fortunes; this point being decided, it was agreed that two should go together, to render each other mutual assistance in case of need.

"The seventh was just gone, and Tuthill and myself stood just ready to follow, when heavy footsteps were heard ascending the staircase—the door was softly closed, and the remaining few stood anxiously waiting the event. We feared that the last gone would not have had time to get through the hole in the door, and that the stranger, in groping his way up the stairs, might clap his hand on him. Our fears, however, were fortunately unfounded; after speaking to an Englishman confined in a room above, and discovering by his faltering accents that he had been sacrificing to Bacchus, this scarecrow descended the staircase, and entered the room below.

"Tuthill and myself now ventured forth, barefoot, our shoes girded round our middle, and furnished with a loaf of brown bread, and a certain quantity of brandy in a bladder. We crept through the hole, and found ourselves on the staircase of the opposite side of the building, at the top of which we fancied we saw a figure watching. No time, however, was to be lost; we descended the stairs, at the

bottom of which a door opened into another room, occupied by our guard, whom we heard talking and laughing. We were now at the door which opened out on the ramparts, and from whence the white rope was visible, fastened to a huge stone, and leading through one of the embrasures. Having looked cautiously round, and seeing no one, we ventured across, and jumped into the embrasure, where we found one of our companions waiting to descend; another still hanging to the rope.

"At this moment two Frenchmen passed through the gate of the fort, and were crossing the drawbridge which led down to the town: they were followed by a dog. On arriving opposite the part of the wall we were descending, the dog made a stand, and began to bark; fortunately the master, earnestly engaged in conversation with his companion, was less clear-sighted than his dog, and rewarded him with several blows of a cane, which put an end to his barking, and to our immediate apprehensions.

"Tuthill, who had sprained his wrist some days before, now descended, trusting only to his left hand, and arrived in safety at the bottom. I now prepared to follow, and clinging to the rope, descended gently about half-way; here a projecting part of the rock on which the fortress was constructed, afforded me a resting-place for some seconds. Whilst in this position I heard the footsteps of men ascending to the fort from the town, and on their approach discovered them by their conversation to be two of the veterans returning to the fort from spending the evening in town. They passed underneath, and quickly got under the archway leading to the fort.

"I now began again to descend, but owing to the projection of the rock, the rope now hung in a perpendicular direction, and deprived me of the use of my feet, which, until then, had been of considerable service to me. Besides my arms being tired with so long sustaining my whole weight, I was under the necessity of letting myself slide; and as I lost the command of myself as the velocity

increased, I may almost be said to have fallen the last twenty feet. At the bottom were several logs of wood, piled on each other, some of which being displaced by the fall, rolled over and produced a rumbling noise, rendered more audible by the stillness of the night. The fear of an alarm quickly roused me from the stupor which so rapid a descent had caused, and gliding along the foot of the wall, I crossed the drawbridge leading out of the fort, and by the side of some palisades discovered two of my companions. We waited anxiously the arrival of the fourth, who was not long in joining us, and we immediately proceeded to endeavour to extricate ourselves from the entrenchments by which the fort was surrounded. In this we found no small degree of trouble, and a quarter of an hour must have elapsed before we had the satisfaction of finding ourselves on a road leading into the country.

"We now took to our heels, unmindful of the danger of running without shoes on the frozen ground and pieces of ice. After running about half a mile, we stopped to take breath, and cast a farewell look on the gloomy mansion which we hoped never to revisit. We now judged it prudent to put on our shoes, to avoid the painful accidents so likely to happen to our feet from the rugged ground. Judge of my mortification on discovering that I had lost one of my shoes, as I supposed, in descending the wall. It would have proved rather detrimental than otherwise to have put on the remaining one; I therefore resolved to proceed barefoot, until an opportunity might offer of providing myself with another pair. The clock of the fortress now struck eight, and we set out at a good round pace, in the direction which we supposed would lead us toward the Rhine. In a few minutes afterwards the hills were momentarily illuminated by a flash, which was soon followed by the report of a gun, warning us of our escape being discovered. We now again set out to run, and the bells of the town, which were almost instantly set in motion, guided in some measure our steps.

"At length we arrived at a wood, into which we immediately penetrated, as an asylum from horsemen, whom we naturally supposed would be immediately despatched in pursuit of us. We proceeded with silence and caution, endeavouring to keep the course we had at first adopted; the night was cloudy—not a star was visible—and the moon, which peeped at intervals from behind a cloud, was our only guide. About midnight we stopped to refresh ourselves by the side of a brook, and were regaling ourselves with the provisions we had brought from the fort, when we were suddenly alarmed by the barking of a large house-dog close to us, who, immediately on giving the alarm, ran to a farmhouse at a small distance, which had until then escaped our observation. We lost no time in packing up the remains of our viands, and walked boldly past the house, trusting that its inhabitants would not have had time to rouse from their slumbers. We continued our journey, walking quick, and sometimes running, in what we conceived the proper direction, and began to flatter ourselves we had made considerable progress, and that we could not be more than five or six leagues from the Rhine. Turning the corner of a wood, just as the morning dawned, we met with a peasant, who bore the appearance of a wood-cutter; and thinking the opportunity favourable for informing ourselves of our situation, we accosted him, carefully avoiding the mention of the place we had left. Judge of our surprise and mortification on discovering from his answers that we were not more than three or four leagues from our ancient dwelling!

"Our ardour was not a little damped by this discovery, together with the gloomy prospect which presented itself of passing the day in a wood, which lay at some distance, and in which we purposed taking up our abode. On crossing a road, however, on the top of a hill which lay between, we met with another peasant, and being desirous of gaining further intelligence, questioned him in order to enable us to continue our journey the following night. He

at first seemed to dislike our appearance, and was reserved in his answers. A three-livre piece, however, produced a wonderful and instantaneous effect, and he became surprisingly communicative, pointing us out the direction in which the Rhine lay, and even offering to conduct us part of the way. Emboldened by this appearance of zeal in our behalf, we gave him to understand that we had been travelling all night, and that the peculiar circumstances under which we laboured would oblige us to conceal ourselves in a wood during the day, unless he could devise some means of secreting us and of providing us with an asylum against the inclemency of the weather. Further to excite his compassion, we showed him our hands and feet, torn as they were and blackened by the frost. We concluded our request by the promise of a handsome reward, and to show him we possessed the means, produced several pieces of gold. The latter part of our argument had a visible good effect. After appearing to ruminate some moments, he told us that he had no house of his own, but that he lived with several other labourers, on whose prudence he could not sufficiently rely to place us in their power, but that he knew of a barn, in which he sometimes went to thrash, where he could conceal us and answer for our security. We immediately closed with his offer, which met with universal approbation, and hastened to the place in question before the day was further advanced. The barn lay in a valley at four stones' throw from a small village surrounded by hills. On entering the barn, we gave him two six-livres pieces, the farther to ensure his fidelity; we then climbed into the loft, and placed ourselves in one of the corners most remote from observation."

At this point the narrative unfortunately breaks off. As has been said, Ashworth was killed before he could continue it.

He and his companions, however, were able to get across the Rhine undiscovered, and traversed Baden and

half through Würtemberg in company. In Würtemberg an injury to his foot compelled Ashworth to stay behind the others for a few days, intending to overtake them later. Possibly he owed his getting through to Trieste to this mishap. In Bavaria eight of his eleven comrades were trapped by the police, and sent back as prisoners to France—as had already once happened to Midshipman O'Brien on the occasion of his second escape—Bavaria being at the time one of Napoleon's vassal states.

Three of the eleven got through and reached Trieste, then Austrian territory, where Napoleon could not seize them. They picked up at Trieste yet another escaped British midshipman, named Masters, who had broken away from a convoy of prisoners while on the way from Verdun to Bitche, shortly after Ashworth and his companions made their escape. Masters had made his way through eastern France, and then across the Tyrol and round by Venice.

Young Ashworth joined his escaped friends at Trieste, and then, within a few days, a British frigate, cruising in the Adriatic, opportunely arrived in the harbour. That ship took them on board and carried them to Malta, to be found berths by Collingwood—at that time in chief command in the Mediterranean—in various men of war of his fleet.

In a letter which Midshipman Ashworth wrote home on getting to Malta, he briefly outlines the final incidents of his adventure: from the point at which his detailed narrative breaks off:

"Thank God I have at length recovered my liberty, which I bought with excessive fatigue and anxiety of mind. I escaped from Bitche with eleven others the night of December 8. After walking six days barefoot through frost and snow, I crossed the Rhine with my companions. A wound which I received in my foot the night of my escape, and which I was afraid would mortify, obliged me to wait in a village in Würtemberg; and as

our situation was critical, I begged my fellow-sufferers to leave me and proceed on their journey. In nine days I found myself able to walk, and travelled as a Swiss through the States of the Confederation of the Rhine. After innumerable hairbreadth escapes, I arrived at Salzburg, a frontier town of Austria, where I procured a passport as an American officer, and travelled with more safety to Trieste, a seaport on the Adriatic. There the English Vice-Consul, Mr. Delon, gave me £20 for a bill on my uncle, and a few days after the *Unité* frigate appeared off, and I embarked. We arrived here on the 14th.

"Captain Campbell introduced me to the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball, who advised me to join Lord Collingwood, and endeavour to pass my examination in the fleet; promising to recommend me, as promotion is very rapid on this station, and there is a number of vacancies in the fleet. I took his advice. The *Unité* is expected to sail every hour to join his lordship, either at Palermo or Minorca. Captain Campbell had the goodness to desire his agent to advance me what money I pleased to procure myself uniform, etc. . . . On my arrival at Trieste I was literally half naked, and in my present situation it is necessary to keep appearances."

WHEN THE END CAME

THE end for the Verdun prisoner-depôt came as a surprise: in January, 1814. Within a week of the Allied Army crossing the Rhine, Napoleon, then at Châlons-on-the-Marne endeavouring to reorganize the Grand Army for its last stand, on January 6, issued instructions for all the depôts in North-Eastern France to be removed to a safer neighbourhood. The Verdun depôt was ordered to be cleared out at once, and the prisoners of war and *détenus* transferred *en bloc* to Blois. Already Blücher's Prussians were crossing the passes of the Vosges, and Russian Cossack patrols had been seen beyond Nancy. The British prisoners at all the depôts were hurriedly set in motion: at Longwy and Besançon, at Briançon, at Givet and Charlemont; even those at places so far west as Arras, Valenciennes, and Cambray; also the punishment-depôts of Bitche, Sedan, and Sarrelouis. Orleans, Blois, Poictiers, Tours, Autun, Amiens, Maubeuge, and Bapeaume, were named as the places of concentration.

The prisoners in every case were ordered to quit their quarters within a few hours. They were summarily ejected—literally bundled out; the short notice being received at some of the depôts with a feeling little short of consternation. What did it mean? That was the question that all were asking. To be routed out like that at practically only one day's notice, and forced to set out on a long and arduous journey in the midst of winter, with deep snow all over the country, came on

them as an act of sheer barbarity. Few of the prisoners, as a fact, had any inkling as to how near the end of the war was: to what desperate straits Napoleon had been reduced. Very little intelligence indeed had reached the prisoners as to the extent of the disasters of the Grand Army in Germany. Practically nothing of what was happening was known in France even then. To clear them all out and make them change quarters at that season of the year seemed to the British prisoners only a fresh infliction of unnecessary suffering.

On the eleven hundred captives at Verdun in particular the news of the forthcoming exodus fell with the shock of a stunning blow.

There many circumstances combined to aggravate the situation tenfold. At Verdun the Englishmen owed money to tradesmen and lodging-house keepers all over the place; hardly anybody had any cash in hand; how were they to provide their indispensable travelling expenses, to procure proper clothing for the journey? The French authorities on the spot had received no money to make advances with: the prisoners' last allowances had all been spent, the next were not yet due. For nine out of ten of the officer-prisoners trudging on foot through the snow, clad as they were, in company with their gendarme escorts, was what they had to look forward to. Only a very few of the higher officers and the richer *détenus* had funds sufficient to provide conveyances.

There was this also to add to the general distress. For the majority of the *détenus* the prospect was disastrous, indeed appalling. Most of them had been in residence for years, and had settled down in Verdun with their families as in their homes. Some, indeed, had purchased and furnished the houses they occupied. Like their officer friends, they too, in addition to their debts in Verdun, had no ready money or means of getting any. Some again had young children; while a considerable

number were elderly people between sixty and seventy years of age, not a few in impaired health and infirm. But the order for all to clear out at once and leave the fortress to its garrison was peremptory.

A Naval Lieutenant among the prisoners wrote this in a letter which he managed to smuggle off while *en route* to a brother-officer then in England, who had been himself a prisoner at Verdun earlier in the war, and had gained his liberty:

"No more than twenty-four hours' notice was given; and knowing as you do the situation of many of us, in arrears for lodgings and in debt in every quarter of the town, you will be better able to conceive than I am able to describe the clamours, reproaches, uproar, and confusion which took place. Many were forced to leave their goods and baggage behind them; and others, with their wives and numerous families, in the midst of winter, were compelled to undertake a dreary journey, over bad cross-country roads, ill-provided with raiment, money, or conveyances."

Lord Blayney describes the scene when the first batch of Verdun prisoners started for Blois, the place named as their destination, in these words:

"On January 12, 1814," he says, "the first division of our countrymen quitted Verdun: it was composed of midshipmen, masters of merchant vessels, and others of inferior classes. The midshipmen, above all, presented a singular sight, from the *bizarrerie* of their costumes and equipages, which gave the scene more the appearance of a masquerade than a march. These young gentlemen, to use one of their own phrases, 'were up to everything,' and such seemed to be the partiality of the fair sex for them that few were without a French female companion, many of whom had made a greater progress in *plain English* than I could have supposed, many having perfectly at command the choicest selection of sailors' oaths and cant sayings which they applied in the slang

style, and with a tone and manner as if they had received their education at the back of the Point at Portsmouth."

But uglier even than that was this display of shabbiness and actual dishonesty which Lord Blayney chronicles:

"All the minor bourgeois of the town crowded together at the gate to take leave of their English friends, and many of them to make a last attempt at recovery of money due to them by the young prisoners. Few, however, if any, were the instances of success, for several of those who had money contented themselves by letting their creditors look at it, merely to tantalize them, and returning it to their pockets told them 'they would be paid by the Cossacks.' Indeed, I am sorry to be obliged to observe that the non-payment of the most great debts, so far from being considered as dishonourable both to the individual and the national character, was almost deemed meritorious, and the general expression for it was softened down to that of 'distressing the enemy!'"

Next day, January 13, the second division of captives, comprising the senior officers and civilian *détenus* with their families, set out from Verdun for Blois. Some of them, we are told, rode; others went in carriages or dog-carts. Deep snow was on the ground, and it was freezing hard; and the conveyances—which, between them, comprised everything on wheels that could be hired or bought in Verdun or the neighbourhood—proved in many cases ramshackle make-shifts; "wretched vehicles that constantly broke down."

In consequence of the exposure a number of the unfortunate prisoners died, we are told, during the first two days' march.

"We set off by detachments, in every possible mode," describes the naval officer quoted, in his letter, "but were obliged to go a prescribed road, and to reach this at a given time. During our march we experienced all the rigours that extreme cold and bad weather could produce. We were billeted upon the inhabitants of the places where

we halted; but I am sorry to say, in general, we were very badly lodged. However, all things considered, I got over it tolerably well. I left Verdun with no more than twenty-one francs, out of which, and the marching money, I not only contrived to meet the expenses of the journey to Blois, but also to buy me a new pair of shoes. I walked the whole of the way, and acquitted myself much to my satisfaction."

On the third day, the road followed by the prisoners from Verdun brought them into the main road, by which, as it chanced, the stream of French fugitives from Metz were making their escape, officials and the civilian population, mostly on foot, and suffering fearfully, like the Verdun prisoners, from the weather. Mixed up with the Metz refugees were a number of French soldiers, largely disbanded cavalry from Napoleon's army, straggling off to the rear by way of Clermont and Châlons. Further on, the train of Verdun prisoners came across masses of French troops on the move, battalions of boy conscripts, with newly raised batteries of artillery, all hustling along with their faces eastward, to reinforce Napoleon for the last stand. To add to the general confusion, too, in the midst of the crowd they got jammed in among columns of Spanish and Austrian prisoners, marching escorted by gendarmes, who were, like themselves, changing depôts, on the way to safer localities.

More than once the route the Verdun prisoners were taking was altered, and they had to make détours by roundabout roads. It led at least to one interesting incident. At one place Lord Blayney and a party of officers who accompanied him met the Pope, who was being transferred from his former place of detention at Fontainebleau. "The Pope," says Lord Blayney, "was in a carriage drawn by six greys, and two four-horse carriages carried the attendant Cardinals and suite, all huddled in together." Lord Blayney, who got a good look at the Pope (Pius VII.), describes him as "a small, pale, mild man,

dressed in ermine." As the Pope passed along, he tells us, "most of the crowd of country people fell on their knees to him." Pressing ahead of the Papal escort of gendarmes, Lord Blayney and his party of British officers got to their next stopping-place—Pithivres, a small town—some hours before the Pope arrived. All the inns there were so crowded by French officers that it was only with the greatest difficulty that accommodation could be found for the English prisoners who, indeed, themselves gave up their quarters on the arrival of the Papal party, to make room for the Pope and his *entourage*. As Lord Blayney says: "I and those with me had to give up our beds to the Pope and Cardinals, the French officers refusing to quit their quarters."

At Orleans, where the column of prisoners which the Naval Lieutenant, whose letter we have quoted from, rested for three days, the officer in question met a hospitable *détenu*, who had been allowed to reside in that part of France for his health—a Mr. Thompson, M.P. for Evesham in 1803. He had been on a Continental tour with his family, and was returning home by Paris when Napoleon's edict made him captive. "This gentleman," says our Verdun Lieutenant, "displayed a most hospitable mind. He was kind and attentive to all; to many he advanced cash, and entertained as many as his house would accommodate whilst the depôt was passing; more than twenty sat down at his table to dine. You cannot think how much it cheered one's spirits, after a long and fatiguing march on foot, to partake of his hospitable cheer and sit by his blazing fires of wood."

Next day they pushed on again and in due course got to Blois, where the Verdun prisoners were ordered to halt until further orders came.

Lord Blayney speaks of finding Blois, on his arrival there, "crammed and terribly expensive." "A turkey," records the General, "which at Verdun cost five or six francs, at Blois was priced at three livres ten sous. A

Loire salmon could only be got at thirty sous the pound, and butchers' meat was nine sous the pound." The only lodging that Lord Blayney could procure for himself was priced at a hundred and fifty francs per month; and the accommodation consisted only of "two miserable bedrooms on the second floor." The town of Blois was indeed in a hopeless condition: "crowded with prisoners changing depôts according to the movements of the Allies, all in a state of miserable fatigue, without clothing or shoes and hungry." In the prevailing confusion no victuals were served out by the French Government to the prisoners, and owing to the inclemency of the weather "many died, or became frost-bitten and crippled for life." Numbers of the English military prisoners, we are told, were found to be literally destitute, in rags, and starving. Efforts were made to relieve them, but "what money the officers and others gave them they squandered in drink, and committed great excesses."

Little time for rest, however, was granted to the Verdun English at Blois. Hardly had they begun to try and settle down, hoping to reconcile themselves to the change of quarters, "some even looking forward to spending a pleasant summer by the Loire," than, in consequence of the persistent advance of the Allied Armies, all were abruptly ordered to move on again elsewhere.

Lord Blayney relates this incident as taking place on one of the last days of his stay at Blois, on news coming to the effect that Napoleon had totally defeated the Russian army. "A grand victory," he says, "was proclaimed by trumpet through the town, and placards were affixed on the chief buildings, announcing that the Russian army "Était entièrement anéantie." General Blayney and the other British officers were directed to attend at the theatre that night to hear the news given out there in the presence of the municipal authorities and the Commandant and the principal officers of the garrison. The announcement was made, we are told, "between the

pieces, when an actor came on the stage and read the official bulletin."

"The player, however," Lord Blayney goes on to relate, "over-acted his part and destroyed the impression he intended to make, and rendered the whole account absurd. After running on with a string of unpronounceable names, and stating that the artillery, caissons, fourgons, baggage, and equipage of the enemy had fallen into the power of the French, he concluded with 'Messieurs, l'Armée Russe est entièrement détruite, et, je suis heureux d'avoir l'honneur de vous informer, sans nous avoir couté un seul homme tué!' All the officials ordered to attend," adds Lord Blayney, "received the news with clapping and shouts of 'Bravo! Vive Napoléon!'"

On that came the turn of the others present.

"The eyes of the whole house were, as might be expected, turned on the English, and they seemed to be not a little surprised at observing John Bull louder in applauding than themselves; vociferating 'Bravo! Vive Napoléon; Encore! Encore!' That brought the actor forward again to repeat the news, and he was even so stupid as to continue, until the French at last perceived that we were turning them into ridicule. From several parts of the house was heard 'Bravo! Ce n'est pas vrai! Bravo! Quel mensonge!'"

"A few days," says Lord Blayney, "proved the ridiculous exaggeration of the report, for this same totally annihilated Russian army resuscitated as if by miracle and gained some considerable advantages. Besides, the positions occupied by the French army as well as the falling off of the funds convinced the people of the successes of the Allies."

The prisoners' depôt was hurriedly moved on from Blois to Gueret in the Department of the Creuse. The order to start was indeed "put in execution within an hour of its receipt." And the journey was made as arduous for them as could be. According to General

Blayney, the British prisoners were directed by General Bonard, the Commandant at Blois, "an ill-conditioned fellow," as Blayney calls him, out of sheer spite, in retaliation for the scene in the theatre, to travel by cross-country roads instead of taking the direct highway. The route prescribed formed two-thirds of a circle, along a bad road which was almost impracticable for carriages, and offered by the way the most wretched accommodation. It was a cruel outlook for the sick and the *détenu* families in the bleak inclement weather of that spring: but General Bonard's order peremptorily forbade any deviation whatever from the route he had named. In the result, however, it proved possible for many of the prisoners to set Bonard at defiance.

Only those really whose poverty compelled them to accompany the gendarmes on foot, for the sake of free lodgings and rations on the way, obeyed the order. The others—including Lord Blayney—took advantage of the prevailing state of general confusion in Central France and paid no heed to it. There being, it was apparent, no means of enforcing compliance, all who could afford a conveyance of any sort, we are told, followed the direct way, the high road, and managed to get on fairly well.

Our Verdun Naval Lieutenant, being among those who had no money, had to tramp with the gendarmes all the way—an eight days' journey, as he records. He says this about it: "The roads are uncommonly bad—they are all cross-country roads—and we shall start without our marching money. The sailors and private soldiers belonging to the depôt, who have preceded us, have suffered dreadfully, poor fellows, being ill-clothed and in want of necessaries of every kind. In short, the whole depôt are hard run; however, I hold up, and shall, by fortitude and perseverance, surmount all these trifles; but, under any circumstances, I rejoice that I am no longer in Verdun. My mind has become much more tranquil since I left that detested place, where I have sometimes wished I had

been left to perish of the wounds I received when I was made prisoner."

At Gueret, "a poor town of 3,000 inhabitants," the refugees from Verdun were allowed finally to settle down. It was, according to Lord Blayney, as miserable a place as could have been found for the purpose. "Prices," he tells us, "were exorbitant beyond conception, and there was only room for half the depôt. Upwards of two hundred people had to sleep in stables and barns, while what lodgings could be procured by the better off were dirty and half furnished only. Lord Blayney says that he had to pay at the rate of 300 francs a month for part of a small house until, after some days of that, he was allowed to hire a vacant country residence outside the town. He took up his quarters there, buying a horse so as to be able to ride into Gueret every day to see after and help some of the soldiers among the prisoners.

Of how the British naval prisoners in general fared at Gueret, we get this glimpse from a second letter which our Naval Lieutenant friend wrote from there on March 14: "The depôt arrived here," he says, "on the 26th ult., and were generally and severally disappointed. Lodgings are extremely dear, and no less scarce. A single room, badly furnished, lets for fifty or sixty francs a month. . . . There are two-and-thirty villages appointed in which we may reside and make our own selection; some of them are five leagues distant from the town. This place consists of no more than three or four thousand inhabitants, and has for a century past been termed 'La Sibérie Française.'" Speaking of general matters in their new quarters, the writer goes on: "As usual, the wealthy travelled post, arrived first at this place, and secured the best lodgings. The clubs fall off: the 'Forty-Five' is shut up; the 'Twenty-Five' is irregular; a few of the party smoke away the evenings. The other hangs on so so; half a dozen of them are not to be met together of an evening. The general resort is at a coffee-house, where smoking prevails. The depôt,

however, is much improved as to morals. Regarding play, there is little or none; except among a certain description, unworthy of mention. . . . As you may well suppose, nothing can be more miserable than our situation, living in a state of tormenting suspense, anxious for news and knowing nothing of what is passing."

How the news of the surrender of Paris and the downfall of Napoleon reached the prisoners at Gueret we are told by Lord Blayney. It was in the first week of April. To the very last there had been no reliable intelligence to be gleaned of the progress of the campaign. Napoleon was said to be holding his own, in spite of the tremendous odds against him. Then, all unexpectedly, with dramatic suddenness, came the news that Paris had fallen. It was on a Sunday evening that the startling message came. As Lord Blayney tells the story, he was at his residence, and was just finishing dinner, to which a few friends had been invited from Gueret, when a private messenger brought in authentic news of the fall of Paris. "The best wine was ordered up from the cellar amid cheers of delight at soon going home!"

"On the following day," continues Lord Blayney, "I went into the town of Gueret. The English were elated to madness; white cockades were exhibited by them: but the Prefect, who had been strongly attached to Napoleon, would make nothing known, and the event was altogether so sudden and wonderful that one half of the inhabitants could not believe it, and were afraid to show symptoms of joy, however rejoiced they might inwardly feel."

The British prisoners, though, were not to be restrained from showing what they thought and felt.

"Our midshipmen became riotous, and the Imperial Eagles which were exhibited in various parts of the town as signs and emblems of Napoleon's omnipotence, were soon destroyed. A confirmation of the good news was coming into the town continually, although the Prefect remained obstinate."

We have from Lord Blayney this picture of one of the closing scenes:

"On the following day we formed a party to go to the play. The players were Bourbonists, or assumed that character, and although the Mayor and many of the authorities had not received intelligence regularly from the Prefect, the players came forward also in white cockades.

"One of them had obtained a very large Croix de St. Louis, and appeared in the formerly much respected character of an old French officer. He was loudly applauded; but the musicians, who, unfortunately, could not play the tune of 'God Save the King,' which possibly they had never heard of, were saluted from all quarters by so sharp a fire of apples and other missiles for their ignorance that they were forced to seek their safety in flight.

"The playhouse now exhibited a scene of friendly riot, confusion, and noise, the French and English mutually crying out 'Vivent les Anglais!' 'Vive les Français!' and complimenting each other, so that the parts of the play were totally changed, the spectators or audience assuming the character of actors, while, *vice versa*, the actors became spectators."

After that apparently pandemonium set in.

"An old French General, with a large hooked nose, met with great attention from his having a Croix de St. Louis and a conspicuously large white cockade. His appearance was quite a caricature, yet he created an additional interest in the English by his crying out 'Vivent les Anglais! Vivent nos Liberateurs!' An Irish officer next seemed to attract notice, and to supersede the old General by his sudden appearance in the house. The first words he uttered were: 'Nous sommes libres! Arrah, blood and thunder, boys, is there none of you can sing "God Save the King"?' And, after a short pause: 'Then, by Japers,' says he, 'since that's so, bedad I'll sing it meself!'

"He accordingly jumped on the stage from the upper row of boxes, and was getting forward tolerably well with his song, when poor Pat suddenly disappeared in the prompter's hole, to the vast entertainment of the audience. It may be presumed he never calculated on the possibility of such a hole being placed nearly in the middle of the stage. It had, however, a good stage effect; and, as he received no material damage from his fall, he reappeared and got through the song, supported by so many discordant voices and notes as to leave the French musicians and actors much at a loss to know the real composition of English music."

With the close of hostilities the English prisoners were drafted off in batches to return home. "Prisoners from various depôts marched through Gueret for Bordeaux to embark there: all in great distress, for the French Government gave no clothing nor even arrears of pay due." For his part, Lord Blayney, acting on behalf of the British Government, obtained funds from local merchants and others for the purchase of shoes at Gueret; but, as he records, "the prisoners mostly drank out the money and sold the shoes."

The prisoners, indeed, more than that, having got drunk, proceeded to celebrate their return home by a general riot. "When elated with liquor they regarded all Frenchmen indiscriminately as having been the authors of their long captivity and misfortunes; the windows, therefore, of the inhabitants suffered severely—scarcely a pane of glass remaining unbroken in the town of Gueret."

* * * * *

This detail may be added to close the narrative of the doings of the British prisoners in France as a sequel. It particularly concerns the British prisoners at Verdun:

The private debts of all kinds, house rent, tradesmen's bills, and so forth, left behind by the British prisoners at their hasty exodus from Verdun, amounted to the sum of three and a half million francs—£140,000. Some of the

prisoners, no doubt, on peace being re-established, sent money over to pay off their creditors; but apparently not very many were so honest. Most of the returned captives as a fact looked on the matter as a case of "spoiling the Egyptians"; they rather gloated over disposing of their grievances against France in that way. They salved their consciences by saying it was a matter for the British Government to settle. The Treasury in England, it would seem, however, had no higher a sense of honour in regard to the matter than the individuals particularly concerned. Under the Treaty of Paris, France paid in cash to England, by way of estimated compensation for English property confiscated at the Revolution, sixty millions of francs, an amount which, when all the claims put forward had been met, proved excessive, no fewer than nine millions of francs remaining unappropriated. That surplus was retained by the British Treasury, who shabbily and dishonestly, on the strength of a Crown lawyer's quibble, refused to pay any of it back to France for the benefit of the Verdun creditors, in spite of urgent representations repeatedly made by the French Government. As late as 1839 efforts were made by the Government of Louis Philippe to obtain repayment to the legal representatives of the Verdun creditors, but, putting forward the excuse that the debts were personal liabilities incurred in a private capacity, the British Government of the day refused to pay a penny, or return any of the surplus.

The money is in this year—1914—still owing to the descendants of the Verdun townsfolk of 1814. Is it too late now, at this time of our *Entente Cordiale* with France, on the point of national honour, as an act of bare justice, for a settlement to be made?

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